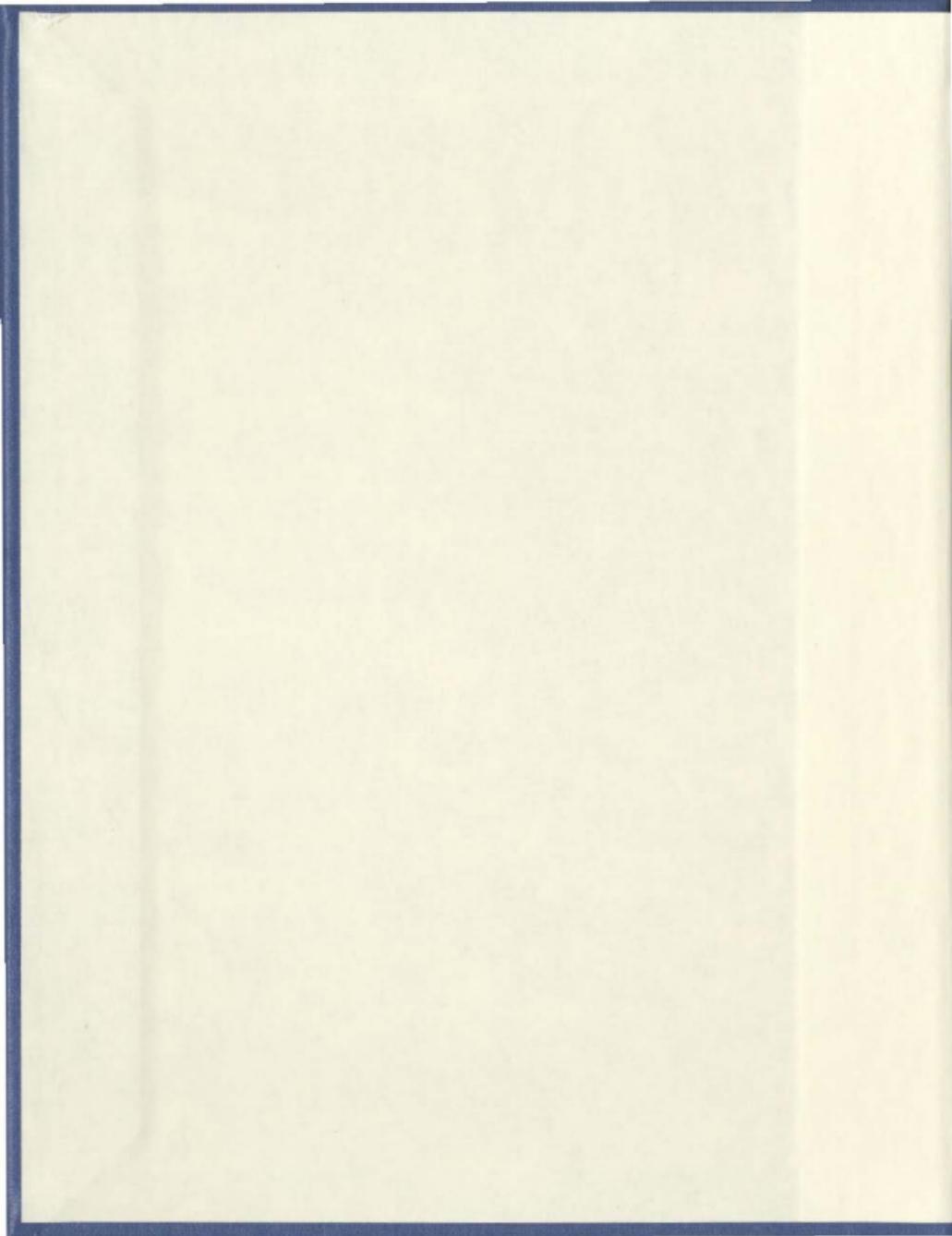


WORK, HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY, AND SOCIAL WELFARE:  
THE TRANSITION FROM TRADITIONAL TO MODERN  
LIFESTYLES IN BONAVISTA, 1930-1960

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***Work, Household Economy, and Social Welfare:  
The Transition from Traditional to Modern Lifestyles in Bonavista,  
1930-1960***

By

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## **Prologue**

The community of Bonavista, situated on the northeast coast of Newfoundland, was the site and focus of international attention in 1997, as local residents, home-comers, government representatives, royal visitors, and many other first-time visitors (to the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as Bonavista) prepared for, and subsequently participated in, the five-hundredth Anniversary celebration of John Cabot's landing at Newfoundland. The years prior to this event were characterized by a flurry of activity centered on recovering and portraying the history of Bonavista, its early settlers, and their way of life, which was based on the inshore fishery.

In addition to the formal and informal organizational and business efforts aimed directly at the June 1997 (and summer) celebrations, there was also a major academic pursuit underway during the years leading up to the 1997 Anniversary. In September of 1994, the Institute of Social and Economic Research at Memorial University of Newfoundland commenced an intense, three-year, interdisciplinary study of the geographical area encompassing the Bonavista Peninsula and the Isthmus of the Avalon Peninsula. This Eco-Research Program involved the gathering and analysis of data by both natural and social scientists, and the publication of much scholarly information about the region. I was a member of the Eco-Research team, and this thesis makes a small contribution to the body of literature produced by the Program.

## **Abstract**

This thesis provides first-hand accounts of the life experiences of some of Bonavista's oldest female residents, while also recording aspects of the history of the community as they lived it. As such, it documents a vital component of Newfoundland's history which has gained recognition in recent years but remains largely unwritten. Whereas much Newfoundland literature favors accounts of the lifestyle and work of self-employed inshore fishermen, this thesis primarily examines women's work experiences, both paid and non-paid, formal and informal, in the years before and after Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada. In the course of doing this research, other related aspects of women's life experiences, and of the history of Bonavista, were highlighted. For instance, this thesis also documents, at least in part, the history of health care in Bonavista; particularly women's experiences of health care via their work as bearers and rearers of children.

From a theoretical perspective, the thesis examines Newfoundland's introduction to social welfare initiatives via Confederation, and argues that Bonavista women were not as significantly affected by Confederation, in financial terms, as much of the traditional economic and political historiography of Newfoundland suggests. Although many of the women interviewed indicated that Confederation had a positive effect on their lives, they often contradicted this by saying that the baby bonus/family allowance was too little to

make any large difference in the household budget. Similarly, many stated that neither they nor their husbands received unemployment insurance for any significant periods of time. In fact, many respondents were adamant in expressing that they and their families did not rely on government money for their livelihood. Moreover, this thesis argues, Bonavista women were not so affected by Confederation because they had been raised to appreciate the value of hard work and, in turn, as adults they worked beyond the subsistence level to contribute to their household income.

### *Acknowledgments*

As with any work of this magnitude, there are many people whose influence, support, advice, and participation were immeasurable in spurring and overseeing the commencement, progress, and completion of this thesis. Although unbeknownst to either of us at the time, I believe that Dr. Terrence Murphy initially sent me in the direction of this work by bestowing his trust and recommendation. Ultimately, Dr. Rosemary Ommen has voluntarily given generously of her time and talents in a supervisory capacity, and I cannot thank her enough for the tremendous opportunities which she has provided to my advantage. She has been a wonderful mentor, providing encouragement and reassurance beyond the call of academic responsibility, as I have traveled the sometimes rocky and unknown paths of this part of my career. Above all else, she taught me to have confidence in my abilities, and to trust my own instincts, as these led me to her in the first place.

There are many other members of the Memorial University community and the Eco-Research team to whom I extend my appreciation for their academic contributions, which richly added to this work. These include Dr. Linda Kealey, Dr. Lewis Fisher, Dr. Barbara Neis, Dr. Malcolm Macleod, Dr. Sean Cadigan, Dr. Stuart Pierson, Dr. Peter Sinclair, Dr. Shannon Ryan, Dr. Greg Kealey, and Dr. Shirley Solberg.

I also recognize and thank members of the Tri-Council Eco-Research Program

executive, and the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), Memorial University of Newfoundland, for providing the financial resources which enabled me to pursue this research.

I am much indebted to Marguerite Linthorne, Bonavista, for her assistance with the verification and provision of information on points of community history for chapter one, the early doctors who practiced medicine at Bonavista and, especially, for details on the midwives who attended Bonavista mothers for chapter five. Marguerite Linthorne was curator of the Bonavista museum for the first twenty-eight years of its existence. Now retired, she continues work on the organization and utilization of the community parish records and genealogical history as an active member of the Bonavista Historical Society.

On a more personal note, I thank my mother for sharing the experiences of her life with me. Her unfailing determination has been an inspiration to me, and her stories provided the initial insight and conceptualization for this work.

I wish also to extend my love and appreciation to my husband who gave quietly but constantly of his love, support, and encouragement. He had a knack for boosting my confidence when the enormity of this project tested my own belief in my abilities, and often rendered me a less than cheerful person to live with. Without his sacrifices, my engagement in this work would not have been possible.

Finally, this work would not have come to life without the voices of those

Bonavista women who shared willingly and patiently of their time and their life experiences to broaden my understanding of the place and space in history which I chose to study. I dedicate this work to them, and to our foremothers and future generations, both theirs and mine.

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

This thesis examines the lifestyle of women working and raising children in Bonavista during the years 1930 to 1960. It presents data which describe women's work in both the domestic economy and in paid employment. It also explains how women sustained their households by way of subsistence and budget-boosting activities. The limited literature on women's work in the family operation of the inshore fishery has documented the underestimated contribution of women in this capacity. This thesis broadens the existing historiography by describing the added household income provided by women's work in the formal economy. It also provides further details as to the extent of the additional work performed by women in bearing and rearing children. As such, it looks into the homes of women in Bonavista from the 1930's to the 1960's. It sees them living without running water and washing machines, and cooking on stoves fueled by wood, coal, or both. It glimpses their experiences of giving birth at the hands of local midwives in the rooms of their own homes, and traces the eventual removal of these events to the cottage hospital. To some extent, then, the thesis documents some of Bonavista's health care history. In particular, it highlights the gradual shift from community medicine to institutional hospital care; and perhaps more importantly, it discusses women's attitudes toward such change.

This thesis also examines and documents the attitudes and experiences of Bonavista women regarding the social welfare benefits which accompanied Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada. In particular, it assesses the extent to which

unemployment insurance, the baby bonus/family allowance, and old age pensions impacted and/or improved the lives of Bonavista women and their families. In summary, then, this thesis provides an analysis of the transitions within the Bonavista household economy during the years 1930 to 1960, from the perspective of its womenfolk, and includes those hidden aspects of health, work, childbearing, and housekeeping which are almost always assumed but all too rarely actually examined.

### Historical Context

The time frame under investigation involved some major turning points and changes for people in Bonavista, as well as in much of Newfoundland, Canada, and the international world. In particular, Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada has been earmarked as having had a major impact on the lives of the people living in the former colony.<sup>1</sup> But, the significance of this event has been much debated and questioned in the past fifty years. The data presented here, consisting of twenty interviews with Bonavista women, lend theoretical support to the argument that, although women derived some immediate benefits from Confederation, these were somewhat smaller and not quite as dramatic in effect as some analysts have posited. Indeed, Bonavista women had

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<sup>1</sup> One of the most recent to do so was John Edward Fitzgerald, "*The Confederation of Newfoundland with Canada, 1946-1949*," M.A. Thesis (St. John's, NF: Department of History, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1992), who stated that "The benchmark of modern Newfoundland history is its Confederation with the Dominion of Canada..." p. 1. Readers may also consult S. J. R. Noel, Politics in Newfoundland (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1971).

developed a strong sense of pride in work and a work ethic which was reflected in their rejection, in principle, of the practice of social welfare which Confederation provided for them. This is not to say that Confederation had little impact on the lives of women in Bonavista, but to argue (a) that other factors were at work prior to Confederation and that some of these had deeper and farther-reaching effects on women's lives than did the more immediate changes which accompanied Confederation, and (b) that Confederation affected women's lives in more significant ways than that associated with that most heralded social welfare provision, the baby bonus. For these reasons, this work emphasizes aspects of Bonavista's economy and infrastructure which, preceding Confederation, facilitated women's employment in the formal economy before it was available to many of their counterparts elsewhere in rural Newfoundland: one indication of the particular circumstances of the Bonavista case which saw modernization take root prior to Confederation.

### Eco-Research Context

This work grew out of a much larger, three-year interdisciplinary research study, known as the Eco-Research Program—encompassing the geographical regions included within the Bonavista Peninsula and the Isthmus of the Avalon Peninsula—which set out to ascertain the viability and sustainability of cold ocean coastal communities in

Newfoundland.<sup>2</sup> One of the main components of the social science portion of this research was the history of the people and places in the area, including an examination of how their way of life has changed, and their attitudes and beliefs about present and future life in these communities. This thesis, part of the historical mandate of the Program, specifically examines the history of women's work in the community of Bonavista, dating from the 1930's, and documents and analyzes the many changes experienced by these women into the 1960's.

#### Portrait of Bonavista, 1930's to 1960's

The community of Bonavista, situated on the northeastern tip of the Bonavista Peninsula, was initially settled in the late sixteenth century and is, therefore, one of the oldest communities on the northeast coast. It was also the most northerly English settlement until the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Bonavista was the largest rural settlement in Newfoundland during the first half of the twentieth century, as well as the

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<sup>2</sup> The Eco-Research Project, 1994-1997, was administered through the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) at Memorial University of Newfoundland, and funded by three Canadian Research Councils. For a detailed description of the scope and objectives of this major research study, see Rosemary E. Ommer, "*Sustainability in a Changing Cold Ocean Coastal Environment: A Proposal submitted to the Tri-Council Eco-Research Program*" (St. John's, NF: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, October 1993). For the results and recommendations of the work, see Rosemary E. Ommer, Principal Investigator, Final Report of the Eco-Research Project "Sustainability in a Changing Cold-Ocean Coastal Environment" (St. John's, NF: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, August 1998). Also Refer to Appendix A: Maps, to view a map delineating the Eco-Research Project Geographical Parameter.

second largest of all Newfoundland communities from 1890 to 1920.<sup>3</sup> The 1921 census returns indicate that Bonavista was then in third position, being only slightly surpassed by Bell Island. By 1935, it had dropped to fourth place, due to the growth of the one-industry towns of Corner Brook, Bell Island, and Grand Falls, respectively.<sup>4</sup> The local economy, initially based on the inshore fishery and subsistence agriculture, was gradually transformed to include fresh frozen fish processing on a large scale.

The Bonavista of the post-Confederation years, although situated in rural Newfoundland, became a *town* with an industrial economy supported by a large-scale, deep-sea fishery and a modern fresh fish processing plant, and was no longer a “traditional” large *outport* community based on the inshore fishery. In the years prior to Confederation, however, the economic structure of Bonavista was dependent on merchant capital and the “truck system” of credit wherein merchants supplied fishermen and their families with provisions for daily life and for their engagement in the fishery, and fishers, in turn, paid or “settled up” their accounts with their catch at the end of the season.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Pamela M. Hodgson, “*Bonavista*,” *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, Vol. I (St. John’s, NF: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Limited, First Edition 1981), pp. 213-214. Rosemary E. Ommer, “*Merchant Credit and the Informal Economy: Newfoundland, 1919-1929*,” *Historical Papers* (Quebec City, PQ: Canadian Historical Association, 1989), p. 170.

<sup>4</sup> *Census Returns of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935*.

<sup>5</sup> Ommer, “*Merchant Credit*,” pp. 169-170.

Aside from recognizing the historical position of Bonavista as the largest single Newfoundland community whose residents derived their livelihood from the inshore fishery, it is also necessary to recreate something of a picture of the community of Bonavista as it existed during the 1930's, 40's, 50's, and 60's. The following chronological synopsis of developments (services, facilities, infrastructure), is intended as a preliminary guide, background and context for the accounts of lived experiences detailed in later chapters.

Two of the earliest significant developments in twentieth century Bonavista were the opening of a branch of the Bank of Nova Scotia in 1903, and the construction of a spur line of the railway in 1911 with a terminal at Bonavista.<sup>6</sup> In 1930, a new school was opened near Cape Bonavista, and a dental parlor was constructed on Coster Street by Dr. Bert Brown, a native of Bonavista who had practiced dentistry in both Canada and the United States. As well, visitors could avail themselves of the services of two local hotels, the Central and the Thornlea, and the former establishment employed a car to meet prospective customers at the train. Also in 1930, the Highroads Commission employed

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<sup>6</sup> Victor Sim, "*A Comparison of the Site and Function of Four Towns in Northeast Newfoundland*," M.A. Thesis (Worcester, MA: Department of Geography, Clark University, 1957), p. 27-28. Note that members of the Bonavista Historical Society have stated that the bank did not open until 1910 (as per telephone interview with Marguerite Linthorne, July 22, 1999, in consultation with Gordon Bradley).

some local men to work on improving the poor road conditions at Bonavista, which also provided some temporary relief to the high level of unemployment existing at the time.<sup>7</sup>

Next, as part of a construction initiative which started with Commission of Government in 1934,<sup>8</sup> a cottage hospital was opened at Bonavista in 1940.<sup>9</sup> According to an interviewee [R 13], one George J. Young, originally of Heart's Content, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland, established a pharmacy at Bonavista in 1949. In the early 1950's, Bonavista residents received mail by train three times per week, and they had a telegraph office which provided long distance communication, as well as forty telephones for local calls. Also, electric light was in general use in many Bonavista homes, but there was "no piped water except for a few houses." A town library was opened in 1952.<sup>10</sup>

A study conducted in the early 1950's indicated that Bonavista received its electricity from the Union Light and Power Company, Port Union,<sup>11</sup> initially by way of water turbine and later diesel-powered generators which conveyed electric power from

<sup>7</sup> Hubert Fisher, ed., The Triple Links, Vol. 1, No. 1 (September 1930), pp. 1, 4, 5, 7, 8. No author is listed for any of the material in this source.

<sup>8</sup> Joyce Nevitt, White Caps and Black Bands: Nursing in Newfoundland to 1934 (St. John's, NF: Jespersion Press, 1978), p. 265.

<sup>9</sup> "Bonavista hospital officially opened at plaque unveiling ceremony," The Evening Telegram (Monday, December 8, 1986), p. 7. No author is listed for this article. Refer also to Hodgson, "Bonavista," in ENL, p. 214.

<sup>10</sup> H. A. Wood, Bonavista Peninsula, Newfoundland (Ottawa: Department of Mines and Technical Surveys, Geographical Branch, 1952), pp. 122, 130.

<sup>11</sup> Port Union is approximately twenty kilometers from Bonavista according to present-day Newfoundland road map.

Port Union to Bonavista by cable. Finally, the streets of this “fishing-industrial town” were still unpaved in the early 1950’s.<sup>12</sup>

### Thesis Themes

The thesis is developed around major historical themes which weave together and reverberate throughout each of the chapters. The focus is one of transition, namely the transition from “traditional” to “modern” lifestyles in Newfoundland. These terms have been defined according to *modernization theory*:

a branch of economic development theory that was applied to state practices in the industrialized and third worlds in the 1950’s and 1960’s. Traditional societies, according to this paradigm, must be infused with capital, technology, entrepreneurship, education and progressive attitudes before they can become modern (i.e. industrial capitalist).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Sim, “*Site and Function*,” pp. 2, 18, 22. Also see Raymond F. Gosine, “*Newfoundland Light and Power Co. Limited*,” in *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*. Vol. IV (St. John’s, NF: Harry Cuff Publications, 1993), p. 60, sub-heading “*Union Electric Light and Power Company*,” which states that construction of the power plant commenced in 1916, and that residents of Port Union received electricity in 1918. The article does not indicate when Bonavista residents also acquired this service. Members of the Bonavista Historical Society have stated that Bonavista was connected to electricity in 1921 (Telephone Interview with Marguerite Linthorne, July 22, 1999, in consultation with Gordon Bradley).

<sup>13</sup> Miriam Wright, “*Women, Men, and the Modern Fishery: Images of Gender in Government Plans for the Canadian Atlantic Fisheries*,” in Barbara Neis, Marilyn Porter, and Carmelita McGrath, eds., *Their Lives and Times: Women in Newfoundland and Labrador, A Collage* (St. John’s, NF: Killick Press, 1995), p. 131. She points out that this theory has been criticized as a polemical and top-down view of economic transition which neither accurately reflects the gradual process of change and development experienced in reality, nor accounts for variations in “values and norms” from one country/society to the next.

The traditional economy of Bonavista included inshore, family-based fishing and fish curing combined with supplementary agriculture. The modern economy involves a larger, industrial-based fishery, factory-tractors and fresh-frozen plant processing, with government social programs to rely on during times of economic depression.<sup>14</sup> In light of this conceptualization of what is traditional and modern, then, the respective chapters ask the question *was there a shift* from traditional to modern in women's paid employment, in their household and domestic work, or in their reproductive work? While asking this question about these three major elements of women's working lives, it is also asking, simultaneously, *what* economic, political, and technological transitions were taking place in outport Newfoundland during the years 1930 to 1960, *how* did these transitions occur, *when* did they occur, and *why*, and *what was the effect* of these transitions on women's lives? The data prove that Bonavista underwent a gradual change from a traditional outport community to a modern, rural town during this thirty-year period, and it does so through the women whose lives and labours influenced and were deeply impacted by the transition.

In addition to tracing the changes which eventually shifted Bonavista from a traditional to a modern society, this thesis also examines the impact of the development of social welfare and the intervention of the state upon the daily lives of Bonavista women

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<sup>14</sup> Sean T. Cadigan, "The Historical Role of Marginal Agriculture in Sustaining Coastal Communities on the Bonavista Peninsula" (St. John's, NF: Paper presented to the Tri-Council Eco-Research Program, October 28, 1994), p. 22.

and their families. Here, social welfare is conceptualized to include government programs such as that of unemployment insurance and family allowances, but it excludes “welfare” per se. The respondents used the term welfare to refer to social assistance which was directly provided by government to persons unable to support themselves and/or their families for various reasons, such as illness, disability, or lack of employment opportunities. In fact, respondents were adamant in their distinction between programs which they viewed as being based on entitlement, as opposed to those which they saw as a last resort for economic survival.

#### Research Procedures and Problems

In preparing to engage in this research, I formulated a set of questions designed to extract something of a life history on each prospective respondent. I conducted one pretest interview in my home community with a woman I knew quite well. Her responses helped me to evaluate the line of questions I had prepared, keeping in mind that the Bonavista women would be complete strangers to me, and I to them. Thus, some questions required revision while others were omitted altogether. The draft questionnaire was commented upon by fellow graduate students and professors in course seminars. It was later reviewed by members of the Eco-Research Project in a scheduled workshop. These sessions helped to refine and clarify the final questionnaire.<sup>15</sup> Once finalized, it was

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<sup>15</sup> Refer to Appendix B: Research Instrument.

then submitted to the Arts Research Committee for review and was deemed ethically acceptable as an instrument for data collection using oral interviews.<sup>16</sup>

To begin my field work, I made an initial trip to Bonavista for the purpose of introducing myself as a graduate student in history at Memorial University of Newfoundland interested in interviewing some of the older female residents of the community. I located my first interviewees, via previous acquaintances, by word of mouth recommendation, and each contact I made tended to snowball and lead to other contacts and/or possible respondents. Although this method worked fairly well and the outcome was good, there were also some problems and limitations to contend with. At the outset, my initial contacts provided me with names and phone numbers of possible interviewees. I telephoned each potential respondent, explained who I was, how I had obtained their name, indicated that I would like to interview them, and gave some examples of the sorts of questions I wanted to ask them. A fair number of the women whom I contacted by telephone refused to be interviewed. Some seemed skeptical of my reasons for wanting to interview them and likely thought that I had some sort of ulterior motives, others expressed doubts that they would be able to provide useful information even when I assured them that I was very interested in chatting with them about their own lives, and some declined an interview due to illness and/or poor memory.

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<sup>16</sup> Refer to Appendix C: Certificate of Ethical Acceptability.

In explaining the “qualifications” of the sorts of women I wished to interview, I stated that I was seeking the eldest women of the community who had raised their families in Bonavista, and who had given birth to at least one child before Confederation and at least one after. I found that this helped my contacts to narrow down prospective interviewees and, once I started conducting the interviews, I found that women who fit into this category could more specifically articulate how various aspects of their lives had changed, or not, during the years following Confederation in comparison to the years prior to it. It is important to recognize, therefore, that I did not stipulate that I was interested in speaking with women who had worked in paid employment. In fact, I was somewhat surprised to have met so many who had worked outside of the household at some point during their lives: either before, during, or after marriage, or some combination thereof. It was this finding, then, which sparked my initial hypothesis that the changes experienced by Bonavista women as a result of the social welfare initiatives accompanying Confederation were not as all-encompassing as is often believed because these women had developed an imbedded propensity for work, self-reliance, and self-support which was not immediately altered by Confederation.

Apart from the problems involved with obtaining interviewees, there were problems to contend with during the interviews, as well. The main drawback was that there were several cases in which respondents either refused to be audio-taped or were

extremely uptight about doing so, despite reassurances of confidentiality and anonymity.<sup>17</sup> In addition, there were a couple of instances where overwhelming background noise made it almost impossible to decipher the interview after the fact. In total, then, I ended up with thirteen clearly taped interviews. In all interviews, I took notes as precisely as possible, but the length and intensity of the interviews obviously resulted in missing some information. Thus, the seven interviews which were not recorded did not leave me with as much or as detailed information as those that were recorded. Yet, I have quoted responses directly as they were spoken by the interviewees to the utmost extent throughout the thesis, since I believe that it is important to record the respondents' experiences and opinions in their own dialect as they expressed them.<sup>18</sup> However, this was somewhat less viable for those which were not taped, even though I transcribed these immediately following the interview session in as much detail as possible.

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<sup>17</sup> Refer to Appendix D: Respondent Release Form.

<sup>18</sup> I have included a maximum amount of the data collected—as opposed to presenting only selected examples of the informants experiences and opinions—because I believe that this increases the reliability and validity of the work. Also, I have recorded the data in dialectic form so as to preserve this particular form of Newfoundland English. There are numerous books which address the do's and don'ts of collecting and using oral testimony. One of my favorites, which advocates this method of historical research, is by Hugo Slim and Paul Thompson, Listening For A Change: Oral Testimony and Community Development (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1995). In particular, see chapter one "Words From the Heart: The Power of Oral Testimony," p. 1 which states "The raw recounting of experience has an authenticity and persuasiveness which it is hard to match, and **most of us would rather hear someone speak directly than read about them through another's words.** ... Most importantly, it gives voice to the experience of those people whose views are often overlooked or discounted." (Author's Emphasis)

### Summary of Respondents

The twenty women whom I interviewed were born between the years 1907 and 1931, and therefore ranged in age from sixty-six to ninety. They also vary with regard to the level of education which they attained. Two of the twenty respondents did not receive any schooling at all, eleven completed some grade school ranging from grade one to grade seven, six others obtained either grade ten or eleven, while only one went beyond grade eleven to some post-secondary training. Moreover, fourteen out of twenty girls worked in paid employment prior to marriage. As a group, the respondents married between the years 1928 to 1950, with most of the marriages dating from the early to mid-1940's. They began having children in the early 1930's and continued to do so until the latter 1960's. The number of children born to any one of the women ranges from two to fifteen. Finally, six of the twenty respondents worked in paid employment during their married lives, while three did so after marriage; in one case following divorce and in the other two due to widowhood.<sup>19</sup>

### Outline of Chapters

Chapter Two discusses some of the historiography relevant to a study of women's work and to the impact of newly formed social welfare policies upon women's daily life experiences. Chapter Three categorizes and examines the various types of paid

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<sup>19</sup> See Appendix E: Summary of Respondents.

employment engaged in by the respondents before, during, and after marriage. In so doing, it examines the “traditional” and “modern” workplaces of Bonavista women over a thirty-year period. Chapter Four describes the various household-based, more informal work roles performed by Bonavista women, including the “making” of dry-salted cod fish; food production, purchase, and preparation; making and washing clothes; housecleaning; and other budget-boosting activities. It then analyzes the transition from “traditional” to “modern” household operations, including the role of technology and its impact on women’s lives and their work. Chapter Five examines women’s reproductive labor, and discusses their birthing experiences with local midwives as well as doctors and nurses at the cottage hospital. It also looks at women’s role in the maintenance of family health via community medicine and the use of home remedies. In other words, it examines the shift from bedroom to hospital ward. Chapter Six provides a brief history of the social welfare provisions of unemployment insurance, family allowances/baby bonus, and old age pension as they came into effect following Confederation. It also outlines respondent experiences and attitudes regarding the receipt of these monies. This chapter draws the previous themes together in terms of the shift from a credit to a cash and wage economy, and in terms of the shift in political context that facilitated and, to some degree, created the emergence of the modern output. Finally, Chapter Seven draws conclusions and assesses the implications of the findings of this research for future scholarship, and for the future viability of rural Newfoundland communities, as per the Eco-Research mandate of sustainability.

## Chapter 2 - A Melding of Literatures

The rhetoric of Confederation as espoused by Joseph R. Smallwood and his supporters has been the subject of much study and debate during the last half of the twentieth century. This rhetoric created a generalized, misleading public perception that Confederation would and subsequently did transform the lives of Newfoundland residents practically overnight. In particular, it engendered the belief that the social welfare initiatives which were part and parcel of the union immediately rendered a tremendous improvement in the economic lives of the populace. In turn, this opinion led to certain specific conclusions regarding the effects of federal transfer payments upon the lives of Newfoundland women.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, there has been too little introspective examination of the impact of Confederation on the daily lives of women in the newly formed province to provide much in the way of compelling, contrasting evidence.

The primary piece of research, to date, that attempts to open this void is Janice Reid's 1991 B.A. Honours Dissertation "Changing with the Times: Women, Household Economy and Confederation" which addressed the impact of Confederation on the lives of four members of one family from Dildo, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland.<sup>21</sup> Reid argued that the effects of Confederation on Newfoundland women cannot be explained simply on

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<sup>20</sup> Joseph R. Smallwood, I Chose Canada: The Memoirs of the Honourable Joseph R. "Joey" Smallwood (Toronto, ON: Macmillan of Canada, 1973).

<sup>21</sup> Janice Reid, "*Changing with the Times: Women, Household Economy and Confederation*," B.A. Honours Dissertation (St. John's, NF: Department of History, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1991), pp. 50-51.

the basis of a conventional wisdom regarding their receipt of the baby bonus, and she aimed, therefore, to dispel some of the myths perpetuated by it. Perhaps the most pervasive of these was that Confederation greatly changed the lives of outport women because the baby bonus put money in their hands for the very first time. Reid argued that Confederation had a much more significant influence than this traditional interpretation proposes, and she also provided evidence which raised important questions about its veracity. She indicated, for instance, that this perspective fails to recognize that the baby bonus was less generous than other federal transfer payments, such as unemployment insurance.<sup>22</sup> She also pointed out that the baby boom started after WWII, some three years prior to Confederation, and that this in itself provides some evidence against the belief that women had more children because of the money they would consequently receive in the form of baby bonus.<sup>23</sup> In other words, she hinted that the post-war boom of prosperity, not to mention the return of previously enlisted men to civilian life, contributed to the increased birth rate in Newfoundland before the small contribution to women and children via Confederation's baby bonus came into effect.

Reid recognized that the economic and political history of Newfoundland contains little regarding the experiences of women or the impact of economic and political events on their lives, despite the fact that they comprise roughly half of the population. She

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<sup>22</sup> Reid, "*Household Economy*," p. ii.

<sup>23</sup> Reid, "*Household Economy*," pp. 78-79.

stated that in the ten years prior to her writing (1980-1990) women became the focus of historical study in relation to early settlement, the fishery, and household economy, but that scarcely any of this literature moves beyond 1930. In particular, she said that Newfoundland economic and political history, to 1990, gives little analysis of the effects of Confederation on the general populace, or of public views toward it.<sup>24</sup> In her survey of this literature, she stated that the political works focus on the belief that Confederation was necessary as a means of modernizing and improving the backward and poverty-ridden living standards of outport Newfoundlanders, thus providing social justification for a political decision.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Reid said that the economic literature focuses mainly on the inshore fishery and on the crises within it.<sup>26</sup>

#### Issues Raised by Reid on Women and Confederation

Reid questioned whether Confederation had as great an impact on the lives of Newfoundlanders as other events such as industrialization or WWII, while she also recognized that the repercussions of such global occurrences were not mutually exclusive and, since these did not operate in a vacuum, they may have combined and/or reinforced one another.<sup>27</sup> She concluded, therefore, that the historiography would expand when

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<sup>24</sup> Reid, "Household Economy," pp. ii-iii, 1.

<sup>25</sup> Reid, "Household Economy," pp. 1-7.

<sup>26</sup> Reid, "Household Economy," pp. 7-17, 29.

<sup>27</sup> Reid, "Household Economy," p. iii.

historians started to explore factors other than Confederation which have changed and impacted the lives of Newfoundland residents, especially women. More pointedly, she stated that further examination of women's roles in past economies will also bridge a gap in the literature.<sup>28</sup>

This thesis will go some distance toward filling those historiographical voids identified by Reid. In chronological terms, it moves some thirty years beyond 1930, and not only does it examine women's experiences in a past economy, it also documents how they dealt with the transition from one type of economy to another. The data presented here support Reid's findings with first-hand evidence and examples which validate her contentions. For instance, it shows some of the ways in which wartime conditions affected the daily lives of women residing in Bonavista, Newfoundland. It also demonstrates that Confederation had a more significant impact on women than the conventional assumptions about the baby bonus have implied. As such, it discusses how women's engagement in various forms of paid employment, along with their work in the household-based, inshore fishery, and their subsistence and budget-boosting activities, was required to ensure the survival of their families. The significant contribution to the household economy by women through the two former work roles has been recognized in the literature, but often leaves one to assume that such women did not otherwise engage

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<sup>28</sup> Reid, "*Household Economy*," pp. 92-93.

in paid employment.<sup>29</sup> However, in the case of the Bonavista women examined here, it is argued that they could reject social welfare, in principle, and engage in paid employment because Bonavista had already entered a period of economic transition and “industrialization” prior to the modernization initiatives accompanying Confederation.

Apart from the literature already addressed by Reid, then, there are two bodies of historiography which are relevant to this thesis. The first of these is that of women’s work experiences in transitional economies, and the other is that of women’s experiences under new and developing systems of social welfare. Both of these are very broad categories that include a literature which addresses the problems of development in third world countries and, although very informative, is beyond the scope of this work.<sup>30</sup> Instead, this thesis focuses on selected historical works concerned with the development of social welfare in Canada, the transition to an industrial economy in Canada, and the effects of these economic and political changes on women’s lives. This permits a comparative look at women’s work in the staple-producing economies of Newfoundland and pre-industrial Canada, while also giving some indication of the changes experienced by women as a result of the economic transition from small scale, household and

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<sup>29</sup> The first and most renowned work on women’s domestic activities is that of Hilda Chaulk Murray, More Than Fifty Percent: Woman’s Life in a Newfoundland Outport, 1900-1950 (St. John’s, NF: Breakwater Books, 1979).

<sup>30</sup> For an examination of such historiography see, for instance, Miriam Wright, “*The Smile of Modernity: The State and Modernization of the Canadian Atlantic Fishery, 1945-1960*,” M.A. Thesis (Kingston, ON: Department of History, Queen’s University, 1990), pp. 26-29.

workshop production to capitalist factory production. Thus, it moves beyond Reid's review of the traditional historiography on the experiences of Newfoundland women *vis à vis* Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada, thereby providing a broader, more national overview of the effects of economic and political transition, and of developing social policy, on women's daily lives.

### Women's Work Patterns in Industrializing Economies

The majority of women who worked in the formal economy in pre-industrial Canada and Newfoundland did so in the staple-producing industries of agriculture and the fishery. One of the major studies on this subject is Majorie Griffin Cohen's book on women's roles in the farming economies of nineteenth-century Ontario. Cohen found that these women worked primarily as producers of subsistence and surplus goods and services in the non-market setting that centered on the household. Cohen stated that both men and women had to work in some capacity in order for the family to survive, and that it was women's labours in the subsistence sphere which provided men the *opportunity* to engage in market-oriented activities.<sup>31</sup>

One of the main arguments put forward by Cohen is that the effects of industrialization on women's work roles was not the same for those in Upper Canada as it

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<sup>31</sup> Majorie Griffin Cohen, Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Ontario (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 10-11, 37-38, 40-41.

was for British women. In this respect, Cohen challenged what she outlined as three of the major effects of industrialization on working women, according to the mainstream view, based on the British experience: (a) that it caused the separation of the household and the workplace which had heretofore been one in the same, (b) that it increased the gender division of labour which had previously been blurred by the necessity of male and female labour to ensure household viability, and (c) that it opened and widened a gap between the male public and the female private spheres of influence, thereby relegating women to a diminished position.<sup>32</sup>

By contrast, Cohen argued that, in Upper Canada, industrialization provided markets for women's surplus household production and, therefore, women's private activities were increasingly commercial in that they were performed specifically for public exchange, barter, or sale. For example, women were the main producers of dairy products for the family and, because of industrialization, they brought much needed extra income to the household from their surplus production. Cohen further stated that a gender division of labour already existed in the staple-producing, pre-industrial economy of Upper Canada in that women produced to meet the needs of the family while men produced for the market. Cohen concluded, therefore, that Ontario women benefitted from industrialization because it increased their participation in commodity production.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Cohen, Markets, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Cohen, Markets, pp. 11, 28, 158-159.

Cohen delineated 1850 to 1911 as the transition years during which women's work began to move from household production to the workplace of paid labour. She pointed out that most female workers during this period were single and widowed women, and that only two percent of Ontario's married women were listed as wage earners in the 1921 census. She argued that "economic necessity"—rather than the advancement of industrial capitalism or the dominance of the ideology that the proper place for married women was at home—was the reason for this female labour force demographic. That is, women's subsistence-based, household labour continued to protect the family unit from the ever-present threat of poverty which accompanied the sporadic nature of waged labour; this being the case in urban settings as well as rural.<sup>34</sup>

In a more recent work, Elizabeth Jane Errington looked at the social and economic impacts of women's work in Upper Canada during the period of colonial settlement. She argued that although most women were primarily wives and mothers, their work in these capacities was so extensive that they concretely influenced the direction of colonial development. At the most basic level, successful colonial settlement required women to procreate and then maintain pioneer families; women's domestic and household work could not be separated from the establishment and growth of the community. Errington also asserted that female colonists were united by collective work roles but that individual

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<sup>34</sup> Cohen, *Markets*, pp. 118-119, 128-130.

differences, namely socioeconomic and marital status, resulted in disparate requirements within these roles, and therefore alternate means and ways of fulfilling them. Upper class, married women who lived in “urban” areas, for example, had to hire and instruct servants in the running of their households, and often participated in charitable organizations and activities. Their middle class counterparts often took in extra work to boost the family income or worked along with their husbands in family-based enterprises. In contrast, the majority of unmarried women, whether single or widowed, offered themselves for hire in return for living accommodations or other compensation. Errington concluded, therefore, that the cult of true womanhood, the rhetoric of domesticity, and the social prescriptions of the time which located women only in the home and never in the marketplace, was an inaccurate reflection of the requirements of colonial settlement and survival.<sup>35</sup>

Sean Cadigan has argued that the wives of Newfoundland’s inshore fishermen were involved in the public realm of the marketplace prior to the onset of industrialization (in contrast to the dairy women described in Cohen’s Ontario study) by way of their essential labour in the production of salt fish. Cadigan discussed reasons why Newfoundland’s economic development lagged behind that of other British North American colonies. He made the case that fishers were unable to diversify their

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<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Jane Errington, Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790-1840 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), pp. 7-24, 233-241.

production toward the development of an industrial capitalist system because the particular characteristics of the Island simply did not provide adequate alternatives. More importantly, Cadigan stated that women's role in the curing of fish took precedence over their domestic and subsistence labour so that even if the soil and climate of Newfoundland had held the potential for surplus agricultural production, women (and men) would have had little time to take on this added work. As such, then, Newfoundland fisher women engaged in market production via their curing of fish in preparation for its exchange to the merchant for credit, while also fulfilling their numerous domestic responsibilities, and working in subsistence agriculture to the extent possible, given Newfoundland's poor soil and climate.<sup>36</sup>

It has been recognized that in the case of fishing settlements, such as those in rural and outport Newfoundland, the merchant capitalist economy was still in place when industrial capitalism was developing in other regions of Canada. Here, industrial development was characterized by a longer, more difficult struggle, notwithstanding the efforts of various colonial and responsible governments to speed the process along. Patricia Thornton has bluntly stated that "both the Maritimes and Newfoundland failed to develop successfully...and despite optimistic beginnings, were ultimately unable to complete their industrial transformation: Newfoundland was unable to diversify out of its

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<sup>36</sup> Sean T. Cadigan, Hope and Deception in Conception Bay: Merchant-Settler Relations in Newfoundland, 1785-1855 (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 64-78.

single-resource base....<sup>37</sup> Thornton argued that out-migration played a major role in the south coast of Newfoundland's lack of development, and presented data to support the contention that, in some parts of the colony, out-migration was probably an important element in weakening the potential growth of the Newfoundland economy. Certainly, this slow economic growth contributed to the fact that rural, outport Newfoundland women—the vast majority of whose households were supported by the inshore fishery—could not enter a waged labour force until much later than their counterparts in the agricultural sectors of Canada: that is, until industrialization began to take root.<sup>38</sup>

Rosemary Ommer's statistical analysis of the 1891, 1901, 1911, and 1921 census returns for the community of Bonavista provides further support to Thornton's out-migration theory. Ommer's analysis, based on the census population figures, led her to suggest that out-migration of working-age residents, along with a relatively constant/consistent birth rate, was a strategy of adaptation which served to maintain/sustain the population of Bonavista. Ommer calculated an average of 2.3 children per household for 1890, and 1.6 children per household for 1900, 1910, and 1920; children being defined as those members of the population who were fifteen years

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<sup>37</sup> Patricia A. Thornton, "*The Problem of Out-Migration from Atlantic Canada, 1871-1921: A New Look*," *Acadiensis* XV (Autumn 1985), p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Thornton, "*Out-Migration*," p. 27. For a more in-depth analysis of the role of migration in the Newfoundland economy, see Patricia A. Thornton, "*Dynamic Equilibrium: Settlement, Population and Ecology in the Strait of Belle Isle, Newfoundland, 1840-1940*," Ph.D. Thesis (Scotland, UK: Department of Geography, University of Aberdeen, 1979).

of age and younger. Furthermore, she calculated that while there were, on average, 5.5 persons in Bonavista households in 1890, this total dropped to 4.6 persons per household in the three subsequent census years, despite the fact that some of these households (nineteen in 1890, sixty-nine in 1910, and thirty-six in 1920) contained more than one family. Thus, it was found that families were not overly large for the period, especially in light of present day standards which define one or two children per family as the norm, or 1.2 children per household, statistically translated.<sup>39</sup>

Ommer further calculated that while the number of children increased by twenty-four percent between 1891 and 1901, there was also a total population loss of twenty percent, much of it from the working-age group.<sup>40</sup> This prompted Ommer to conclude that out-migration was a major factor in sustaining the region's population. She also found that "more people had less land per household to work with and they were using it increasingly intensively."<sup>41</sup> Since the resources of the region were being utilized to the utmost potential, then, people left to find alternative areas and means of securing a living. This sense of having reached capacity was also echoed by Hilda Chaulk Murray in her book about the nearby community of Elliston. She stated that people from Bonavista

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<sup>39</sup> Ommer, "*Merchant Credit*," Table 1(b), p. 171.

<sup>40</sup> Ommer, "*Merchant Credit*," p. 171.

<sup>41</sup> Ommer, "*Merchant Credit*," p. 173.

moved to Elliston due to overcrowding, and the overtaxing of Bonavista's land and sea resources. This was a factor in the "peopling" of Elliston.<sup>42</sup>

Bettina Bradbury's work on industrializing Montreal also indicated that working-class women, in this urban and growing capitalist setting, continued to engage in pre-industrial forms of labour in combination with the wages of the male head and other family members in order to secure family survival. Much of the paid work performed by women was mediated by their domestic responsibilities and by the family life cycle. Thus, while their husbands, sons, and daughters left the household to earn wages, married women performed extra work at home (such as sewing, laundry, or cooking) which could be shuffled with their existing tasks. They produced food for the family from their gardens, and they raised pigs and poultry which also provided food in the form of meat and eggs, or could be sold in the marketplace for cash or exchange. Bradbury concluded that these women were optimally employed by their household labours and, therefore, did not engage in paid employment away from the household unless forced to do so in times of dire poverty or extreme financial crisis.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Murray, *Fifty Percent*, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart, 1993), pp. 152-155, 165-167, 169-172. Readers might also see Bettina Bradbury, "Pigs, Cows, and Boarders: Non-Wage Forms of Survival among Montreal Families, 1861-1891," *Labour/Le Travail* 14 (Fall 1984), pp. 9-46.

Nancy Forestell's study of women's employment in St. John's from the 1920's to the 1940's contains some similar findings. It indicated that the prevailing male breadwinner ideology was a myth because poor economic circumstances made it nearly impossible for working class families to survive solely on male wages, thereby compelling married women to take advantage of such paid work as was available to their particular class and gender. Forestell emphasized that "...the decision of an individual woman to seek wage labour was most often inextricably linked with the well-being of her family."<sup>44</sup> She also found that when married St. John's women did engage in paid labour, they did so mainly within the confines of their family and domestic roles, much like their counterparts in Montreal had done before them. They took in part-time work at home such as sewing and washing clothes, and a smaller number took in boarders, while some were owners/proprietors of confectionary and grocery stores.<sup>45</sup>

In summary, then, the historiography on women's early work experiences indicates that they engaged in both household and market-oriented work and, in both instances, their labours were focused on sustaining the financial well-being of their families. Newfoundland women had this in common with their Canadian counterparts;

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<sup>44</sup> Nancy M. Forestell, "*Times Were Hard: The Pattern of Women's Paid Labour in St. John's Between the Two World Wars*," *Labour/Le Travail* 24 (Fall 1989), p. 148.

<sup>45</sup> Forestell, "*Times Were Hard*," pp. 147-166. For a more detailed analysis also see Nancy M. Forestell, "*Women's Paid Labour in St. John's Between the Two World Wars*," M.A. Thesis (St. John's, NF: Department of History, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1987).

the difference was that the traditional household economy continued well into the twentieth century in Newfoundland, whereas other parts of Canada had since diversified so that some women engaged in formal capitalist production in the labour force that was separate from their homes. However, both groups of women entered the formal workplace in conjunction with other forms of adding to the family budget. Thus, the literature establishes that a variety of women's work, not merely the "domestic" component of it, was essential to the survival of the household.

#### Women's Work Patterns in Developing Social Welfare Systems

Family and household responsibilities mediated virtually all facets of women's lives, particularly their engagement in paid employment. Also, the policies and initiatives of the newly developing welfare state in Canada oftentimes placed added restrictions on women's capacity to contribute to the financial well-being of their families through paid employment.

In the Newfoundland instance, pioneer women's anthropologist Ellen Antler recognized the monetary importance of women's work in the household which was the unit of economic production in the outports. The small-boat, inshore fishery was an operation too labour intensive yet not productive enough to secure the total budgetary needs of the family. In addition to their participation in the processing of the highly perishable and weather sensitive catches of cod, then, all family members often engaged

in any other productive activities at their disposal, both paid and non-paid, so as to add to the household income. This was particularly true of the wives of inshore fishermen.<sup>46</sup>

Antler argued that a devaluation of women's work in the household fishing enterprise was begun when the need for women to work at curing fish on shore was lessened, first, by the technology of the cod trap—which enabled fishermen to harvest their catch more efficiently—and, later, by provincial Resettlement and Community Stage programs. Resettlement initiatives (1957 and 1966) aimed to move people from coastal outports to more urban areas which offered employment alternatives. The use of community stages saw the processing of salt bulk fish which was "...salted but not dried...": an operation which was executed away from the household based processing facilities and did not require the additional curing work previously performed by women. Antler emphasized that the industrialization of the fishery in Newfoundland stripped fishermen of their ownership and control of the means by which they earned their livelihood and, in so doing, made women's role in this work redundant.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, she

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<sup>46</sup> Ellen Antler, "Women's Work in Newfoundland Fishery Families," Presented to Conference on Women (Halifax, NS: Mount Saint Vincent University, November 13, 1976), pp. 1-5. Also printed in *Atlantis* 2, 2 (Part II, Spring 1977), pp. 106-113.

<sup>47</sup> Antler, "Fishery Families," pp. 6-7, 10. Antler has been criticized by Donna Lee Davis, "'Shore Skippers' and 'Grass Widows': Active and Passive Roles in a Newfoundland Fishery," in Jane Nadel-Klein and Donna Lee Davis, eds., *To Work and To Weep: Women in Fishing Economies* (St. John's, NF: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1988), pp. 211-229. Davis argued that Antler's analysis misrepresented women as passive victims of fisheries modernization. Davis argued, instead, that women adapted to changes in their work roles by incorporating the new with the traditional in such a way that the aspects of their work

stated that although policymakers expected women to take jobs in the fresh fish processing plants, the conditions of this modern employment subjected women to overexploitation and devaluation in jobs which were more physically and emotionally draining and paid much less than the work that they had performed in the family fishing enterprise. She calculated that, in 1968, women would have had to work eight hours a day for twenty-six weeks at minimum wage in order to render an income comparable to that earned in six to seven weeks of work in the family fishing operation.<sup>48</sup>

Miriam Wright's work provides more concrete evidence that once outport Newfoundland women did begin to enter the formal labour force as a result of the development of large-scale, fresh fish processing plants, the design of government policy—which was aimed at the modernization of the fishing industry in Newfoundland—specifically relegated them to the household or, when this proved

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which empowered their lives were expanded rather than eroded. Antler has also been challenged by Marilyn Porter, *Place and Persistence in the Lives of Newfoundland Women* (Aldershot: Avebury Press, 1995), chapter 3: “*She was Skipper of the Shore-Crew*: Notes on the History of the Sexual Division of Labour in Newfoundland,” pp. 39-59; and chapter 5: “*Women and Old Boats*: The Sexual Division of Labour in Newfoundland Outports,” pp. 81-97. Porter argued that a somewhat rigidly defined gender division of labour within the household fishing enterprise did not automatically mean that women were always passive while men were always assertive and dominant. Instead, it was common for women to call the shots, so to speak, within their own spheres of work, which included fish processing as well as other household-based work.

<sup>48</sup> Antler, “*Family Fishery*,” pp. 8-9. Readers may also see Ellen Antler, “*Fisherman, Fisherwoman, Rural Proletariat: Capitalist Commodity Production in the Newfoundland Fishery*,” Ph.D. Thesis (Hartford, CT: Department of Anthropology, University of Connecticut, 1981).

unsuccessful, to the lowest paying and least upwardly mobile plant processing positions. Wright gave numerous illustrations to indicate that the beliefs and attitudes of bureaucrats in the federal Department of Fisheries—as reflected in official “modernization” policy—were that the fishery was and should continue to be the work of men.<sup>49</sup> Advertisements for the modern product of fresh, frozen fish, for example, portrayed the stance that men caught and processed fish whereas women purchased it from the shop and prepared it for the family dinner table. Wright concluded, therefore, that even though more than forty percent of the people engaged in the inshore fishery during the census years 1891 to 1921 were women, and even though many women subsequently performed the poorest paid jobs in fish plants due to “economic necessity” (that is, to ensure the survival of their families), their essential roles as fishery workers were “either downplayed or ignored.”<sup>50</sup> Wright also indicated that although women were needed to continue the processing of fresh fish during the war years, government policy reflected that this was only a temporary condition and that these women would begin and/or resume what were inferred to be their more legitimate household duties once the crisis of war was dealt with.<sup>51</sup>

Wright also addressed the impact of the unemployment insurance (hereafter UI) system on the lives of Newfoundland fishermen and their wives. She noted that although

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<sup>49</sup> Wright, “*Images of Gender*,” in *Lives and Times*, pp. 132-139.

<sup>50</sup> Wright, “*Images of Gender*,” in *Lives and Times*, pp. 129-136, 140.

<sup>51</sup> Wright, “*Images of Gender*,” in *Lives and Times*, pp. 136-143.

UI was extended to fishermen in 1958, neither the wives of self-employed fishers nor those of crew sharemen were eligible to contribute to the UI fund or subsequently collect benefits in the off-season. In fact, this source of income was not made available to women who were so employed until 1980.<sup>52</sup> Victoria Silk, who was an independent fisher out of Petty Harbour, Newfoundland for eight years, further indicated that women who fished with their husbands gained eligibility for UI as a result of the efforts of Rosanne Doyle of Witless Bay, Newfoundland who “successfully challenged” UI legislation in the Supreme Court of Canada.<sup>53</sup> Silk, herself, also contested UI legislation pertaining to fishers following her first season in the fishery in 1979. After upwards of four years of legal battling, her struggle resulted in an extension of the UI qualification period for fishers from twenty-six to fifty-two weeks.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Wright, “*Images of Gender*,” in Lives and Times, pp. 142-143.

<sup>53</sup> Victoria Silk, “*Women and the Fishery*,” in Barbara Neis, Marilyn Porter, and Carmelita McGrath, eds., Their Lives and Times: Women in Newfoundland and Labrador. A Collage (St. John’s, NF: Killick Press, 1995), p. 268.

<sup>54</sup> Silk, “*Women and the Fishery*,” in Lives and Times, p. 267. See also pp. 264-269 which is her account of her own personal experience as an independent fisher woman. Refer, as well, to Bonnie J. McCay, “*Fish Guts, Hair Nets and Unemployment Stamps: Women and Work in Co-operative Fish Plants*,” in Barbara Neis, Marilyn Porter, and Carmelita McGrath, eds., Their Lives and Times: Women in Newfoundland and Labrador. A Collage (St. John’s, NF: Killick Press, 1995), pp. 144-162 which also addresses the particular difficulties which the UI system poses for women. Note that p. 152 recognizes that fishers could collect UI benefits only from November 1<sup>st</sup> to May 15<sup>th</sup> at the time when she conducted her study.

Turning now to the development of social welfare programs in Canada, Ruth Roach Pierson looked at the lack of consideration given toward the female worker during the 1934 to 1940 Canadian unemployment insurance debates. She argued that such inattention resulted from the view that women were expected, first and foremost, to function as wives and mothers and were, therefore, only temporary and transient members of the paid workforce. Pierson demonstrated that, in fact, the UI system was specifically designed to promote and proliferate this gender paradigm.<sup>55</sup> She examined various aspects of the 1935 and 1940 legislation which served to disqualify women from the UI program, either directly or indirectly. She noted, for instance, that the policy of lower contributions by female workers and subsequent lower benefit rates which were in effect from 1935 to 1940 were, for all intents and purposes, continued in the 1940 legislation by way of contribution and benefit amounts proportionate to income: women worked in least skilled and lowest paid job ghettos, thereby earning less when employed, contributing less to UI, and receiving lower benefits during periods of unemployment.<sup>56</sup>

Pierson also discussed the inclusion of dependants' allowances in both the 1935 and 1940 UI legislation. Again, the assumption pervading this provision was that the majority of UI recipients would be men with wives and children to support and, in turn,

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<sup>55</sup> Ruth Roach Pierson, "Gender and the Unemployment Insurance Debates in Canada, 1934-1940," *Labour/Le Travail* 25 (Spring 1990), pp. 77-80.

<sup>56</sup> Pierson, "Unemployment Insurance," pp. 81-89.

that women were primarily dependents of men rather than employees who would require financial insurance during times of unemployment. Her reference to the debate over either (a) boosting the family wage via extra UI benefits for claimants with dependants, or (b) establishing a family allowance scheme, showed that it was the desire of policymakers to maintain this ideological social foundation.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, UI legislation was designed to insulate stable, continuous workers and, as such, carried disincentives and/or penalties against placing frequent claims. In practice, such stipulations served to disqualify women from obtaining benefits since their employment eligibility was mediated by family circumstances (namely pregnancy and child care) which often enabled women to work only on a sporadic basis. This responsibility also rendered difficulties for women in meeting the “capable and available” requirement when they were unemployed, thereby disqualifying them from collecting insurance funds even if they had managed to meet other contribution and benefit criterion. In addition, the legislation unequivocally excluded thirty to forty percent of employed women—domestic servants, nurses, teachers, and civil servants—from insurance coverage. Moreover, both school boards and government departments officially compelled women to quietly resign their positions when they married or, at the very latest, at the time of their first pregnancy, up until at least 1955.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Pierson, “*Unemployment Insurance*,” pp. 90-95.

<sup>58</sup> Pierson, “*Unemployment Insurance*,” pp. 96-100.

In combination, argued Pierson, the above conditions served as a disincentive to married women's membership in the formal, paid labour force. In fact, UI legislation was specifically formulated to exclude women from the labour market to the greatest possible extent. As such, their receipt of UI monies was only to be indirect via their status as dependent wives and mothers, and desirably so according to the framers of the legislation and policymakers of the time.<sup>59</sup>

Jane Ursel examined the evolution of both unemployment insurance and family allowance (hereafter FA) legislation, and of a condition of "social patriarchy" which she deemed characteristic of modern, industrialized welfare states.<sup>60</sup> She argued that both UI and FA were developed, in large measure, to deal with economic problems resulting from WWII. The UI Act was instituted in 1940 so as to provide a buffer for the anticipated post-war unemployment surplus, and associated unrest from workers who had laboured for their country during wartime. In addition, the collection of UI contributions from workers during the war years provided a considerable amount of ready cash which government could employ in the war effort, since it would not need to pay out benefits until after the war was over. Thus, Ursel argued that the war enabled the federal

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<sup>59</sup> Pierson, "*Unemployment Insurance*," p. 103.

<sup>60</sup> Jane Ursel, *Private Lives, Public Policy: 100 Years of State Intervention in the Family* (Toronto, ON: Women's Press, 1992), p. 2. She pointed out the distinction made by some feminists between "familial" and "social" patriarchy: the former refers to "...power and authority over women and children...exercised in the home..."; the latter to "...support for and control over women and children...in laws, institutions and the state."

government to convince its provincial counterparts, which had previously opposed the proposal, that a system of unemployment insurance was necessary, thereby using economics to achieve political objectives. As such, Ursel concluded that the predicament of unemployed citizens was merely an afterthought on the minds of federal policymakers in the case of UI.<sup>61</sup>

In a similar vein, Ursel argued that the Family Allowance Act, passed in 1944, furnished the political impetus for government to stall wage increases proportionate to the cost of living during the war years.<sup>62</sup> She showed that the legislation was, in effect, a compromise policy arranged between the federal government and large business interests as a means of dealing with the dispute between business and labour over wages. Adding to the family wage by means of universal baby bonuses, said Ursel, was government's solution to labour's demands for a higher living wage which business, in turn, had fought to curb. By choosing to institute a system of family allowances—as opposed to lifting the freeze on wages and leaving business to deal with labour's demands for better wages at the bargaining table and/or on the picket line—government placated business by allowing it to retain cheap labour costs while also lessening labour unrest by improving family incomes via supplements for those with children. At the same time, Ursel argued, government saw the provision of family allowances and the associated perpetuation of its

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<sup>61</sup> Ursel, *State Intervention*, pp. 218-221.

<sup>62</sup> Ursel, *State Intervention*, p. 218.

wage regulations as measures which would maintain and improve Canadian economic performance at the international level, thereby promoting “a competitive post-war economy.”<sup>63</sup> Again, the financial circumstances of Canadian families seems to have been last on the list of reasons for the establishment of yet another social welfare initiative.

Ursel concluded that the federal government took an increasingly direct role in the lives of Canadian families during the years of WWII. This began with a system of UI which was regulated on the basis of specific entitlement standards, but quickly evolved to another system which was characterized by universal entitlement: that of Family Allowances. Thus, the system of social welfare in Canada changed from one which provided a “substitute” for wages in the pre-war years—in that it focused on helping those who could not help themselves, as it were, namely elderly and disabled persons, orphans, and mothers—to one which took a more supportive role toward the family costs of “production and reproduction” by generating a “subsidy” for wages which were often too low to pay a family’s everyday living expenses. Therefore, the Canadian welfare state began the transition into its modern-day form during WWII, changing from a system wherein government exercised a right to regulate the economic and, therefore, reproductive spheres of citizens lives, to one where government is expected and

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<sup>63</sup> Ursel, *State Intervention*, pp. 190-195.

compelled to take responsibility for regulating virtually all facets of society to promote the best interests of its members.<sup>64</sup>

Whereas Ursel looked at the impetus for the development of social welfare programs in Canada, Ann Porter moved, chronologically, beyond WWII to examine the ways in which the Unemployment Insurance program impacted the lives of employed and unemployed women in this country. In particular, she focused on a distinct regulation which was designed to restrict married women's access to UI benefits, as enforced from 1950 to 1957. She cited many specific instances wherein both private business and government acted with the express aim of bolstering the post-war ideology of female domesticity. She noted that although women's labour force participation as well as female wage rates rose to unprecedented levels during WWII, in the post-war years women were expected to graciously accept grossly less-skilled, lower-paid jobs than

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<sup>64</sup> Ursel, *State Intervention*, pp. 197-198, 223, 226-227, 252, 255. Barbara Neis, "Familial and Social Patriarchy in the Newfoundland Fishing Industry," in Dianne Newell and Rosemary E. Ommer, eds., *Fishing Places, Fishing People: Traditions and Issues in Canadian Small-Scale Fisheries* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 32-54 has now examined the impact of state policies on women involved in the Newfoundland fishery. She has attempted to trace the transition from male dominance in the traditional, household-based inshore fishery to government subordination via the industrialized fishery, with a particular focus on women on the lower ends of the socioeconomic scale. Much like Ursel, she concluded that social welfare policies and state intervention in the fishery first served to perpetuate the exploitation of women within the family, but gradually produced a contradictory result by breaking it (familial patriarchy) down. She noted, for example, that Newfoundland minimum wage legislation did not apply to women until 1955, and from that time until 1974 the rate for women was lower than that for men. This kept women dependent on men for their economic survival, but has since empowered women to demand income parity through unionism and human rights legislation.

those they had held during wartime. If they refused to take work because it was not comparable to that in which they had previously engaged, women were restricted from receipt of UI. Again, this was a conscious move designed to discourage women from continuing in paid work after the war, thereby freeing up jobs for the men who had defended their country. Added to this, barriers which had restricted women's labour force participation prior to the war were re-erected: the federal government discontinued its financial role in the provision of daycare facilities, women were disqualified from civil service work if they were married, and income tax provisions were specifically designed to discourage married women from paid employment.<sup>65</sup>

Porter further demonstrated that these reinforcements of the male breadwinner myth were drastically exacerbated by the introduction of a new UI regulation, in the autumn of 1950, pertaining to married female employees. "The regulation itself provided that a married woman would be disqualified from UI benefits for a period of two years following her marriage unless she fulfilled certain conditions that would prove her attachment to the labour force."<sup>66</sup> The initial justifications behind this legislation

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<sup>65</sup> Ann Porter, "Women and Income Security in the Postwar Period: The Case of Unemployment Insurance, 1945-1962," in Wendy Mitchinson, Paula Bourne, Alison Prentice, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light, and Naomi Black, eds., Canadian Women: A Reader (Toronto and Montreal: Harcourt Brace, 1996), pp. 322-325. Reprinted with permission from Labour/Le Travail 31 (Spring 1993), pp. 111-144. The editors also point out that although women's participation in the paid labour force decreased after the war, the growth of the service sector resulted in increased numbers of married women taking these job opportunities, despite opposition to the contrary. See pp. 2, 321.

<sup>66</sup> Porter, "Income Security," p. 328.

stemmed from post-war unemployment of large numbers of women who had been deemed essential workers during wartime but were now accused of overtaxing the UI purse. Porter pointed out, however, that most women who had worked up to the end of the war would no longer be in receipt of UI by the time this regulation was enacted. She argued, therefore, that the married women's regulation was a reflection of "...a renewed emphasis on the prewar ideology that married women belong in the domestic sphere...that they did not belong in the labour force, and that their status as dependants meant that they had more limited need for income security."<sup>67</sup> She provided several examples to show that married women became scapegoats who were assumed to exploit the system at every turn, and the regulation deemed them guilty until and/or unless they could prove themselves innocent.<sup>68</sup> Both business and government conveniently ignored the fact that most married women who engaged in paid employment during the post-war period, amid bitter opposition, did so out of "economic necessity."<sup>69</sup>

Although the married women's regulation was abolished in the autumn of 1957, it remained the subject of debate until at least 1961. Porter noted that the work of one female labour economist furnished concrete evidence against the lingering belief that women were abusing and overtaxing the system: calculations of benefits paid to females

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<sup>67</sup> Porter, "*Income Security*," p. 332.

<sup>68</sup> Porter, "*Income Security*," pp. 334-336.

<sup>69</sup> Porter, "*Income Security*," p. 333.

from 1942 to 1959 demonstrated that "...far from being a drain on the UI Fund, women as a whole in fact were *subsidizing* it!"<sup>70</sup> Added to this revelation, Porter contended that the married women's regulation became a dead issue because the early 1960's also dawned with the realization that women were much more than wives and mothers, and more than cyclical, transient members of the work force. The economic reality of the Canadian family demanded a reconsideration of the male breadwinner myth and of the social prescriptions which relegated women to the domestic sphere, so that their presence in the public arena of paid employment, like their need for an independent source of economic security, could no longer be ignored or swept away. Finally, Porter posited that the cause of women's rights and women's equality had been taken up by both labour and women's groups by the 1960's—whereas neither had paid much attention to the plight of female workers in the late 1940's and early 1950's when the married women's regulation was added to UI legislation—and that this political action and representation of women ensured that such blatant discrimination as that embodied in the married women's regulation could no longer be instituted as part of Canadian social and/or public policy.<sup>71</sup>

The selections examined from both groups of historiography above highlight the fact that war was an overarching factor in determining women's status as workers

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<sup>70</sup> Porter, "*Income Security*," p. 340, 342, 343.

<sup>71</sup> Porter, "*Income Security*," pp. 344-345.

throughout the mid-twentieth century. The gender paradigm of the day espoused the explicit belief that women's role in society was to procreate and nurture: the epitome of domestic perfection, except during times of national crisis and/or emergency, even though it was evident that the ideal of the male breadwinner earning a family wage was most often a far cry from the reality of wives and daughters engaging in numerous sorts of budget-boosting and stretching work at the household level, as well as taking paid employment at substandard wages out of sheer economic necessity in order to make ends meet and thereby ensure family survival. The literature also shows that WWII, along with government policies formulated to curb confrontations between business and labour, were major factors in shaping Canadian social policy and in defining the status of female employees. Similarly, both wartime conditions and state policies driven by the principles of modernization demarcated the Newfoundland welfare system and, in particular, women's changing role in the fishery as well as their place in society. The data presented in the following chapters complement and enrich the findings of the historiography, demonstrating that while bearing and rearing children, Bonavista women juggled various forms of household-based labour with formal employment since both were needed to promote the financial well-being of the family, especially in the absence of any significant reliance on, or subsequent benefit from, monetary aid from social welfare programs.

### **Chapter 3 - From Serving Girls to Entrepreneurs: Transitions in Bonavista Women's Employment Opportunities**

Bonavista women engaged in paid employment in the formal economy before, during, and after marriage—or some combination thereof—in the years preceding Confederation as well as during the years following it. The majority of the twenty respondents worked prior to marriage, while less than half did so during marriage, and an even smaller number worked after marriage. The data reveal significant transitions in the types of paid work opportunities available to and pursued by Bonavista women between the years 1930 and 1960. In particular, there was a major shift from domestic paid employment at the level of the household to industrial, factory paid employment by way of the fresh fish processing plant.

#### **Paid Employment Prior to Marriage**

Seventy percent of the respondents worked in paid employment prior to marriage. The two primary venues of employment were domestic work and fresh-frozen fish processing. The former type of employment was common for many Newfoundland women, but the latter was a new type of work which was not available to residents of most other Newfoundland communities at the time.<sup>72</sup> Fifty percent of the Bonavista

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<sup>72</sup> See Miriam Wright, "*Newfoundland and Canada: The Evolution of Fisheries Development Policies, 1940-1966*," Ph.D. Thesis (St. John's, NF: Department of History, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1997), pp. 47-48, 51-52, 59 regarding the opening of the first fresh-frozen fish processing plants in Newfoundland.

women who worked before marriage did so in this new and developing industry, while most of the other half engaged in domestic and related work. Moreover, the majority of this latter group of women left Bonavista and went to other areas of Newfoundland and to Nova Scotia to secure domestic employment. In contrast, the establishment of a fresh-frozen fish processing facility provided Bonavista women with an additional source of local employment.

#### Domestic Employment Outside of Bonavista

One of the oldest informants [R 7] who engaged in paid domestic work left Bonavista to find employment in 1934. She remained away working for about eight years before returning to Bonavista, and marrying in 1942 at the age of twenty-four. At first she went to St. John's as a domestic servant/serving girl:

I was only 'bout fifteen 'er sixteen, I s'pose, my dear, when I went away workin'. I was in St. John's: get up in da mornin' den, six a'clock, go right thru da house, da kitchen and everything, clean up everything, den get da youngsters up da go da school. No washers 'er nothin' den, get to a tub den and scrub out lines a clothes; worked like a dog.

She later engaged in similar employment at Grand Falls for Walter Blackmore and family, of the Robinson-Blackmore group of families, as follows: "I worked with dem fur years. David Blackmore, now, he was a baby; I looked after 'em. ...kneel down to da tub, my dear, and scrub out lines a clothes; no washers." After the respondent left the Blackmore's she was employed as a cook at City Hospital in Sydney for "a couple a years

'er more I s'pose" before returning to Bonavista. She soon married and started having a family, but she returned to formal/paid employment after her husband died at a young age.

Another respondent [R 18] who engaged in domestic employment prior to marriage also worked as a housekeeper/domestic for "three 'er four years" for a Dr. Tulk at Bishop's Falls.<sup>73</sup> She returned to Bonavista and married in 1946. She held a number of jobs during her married life, as will be indicated in section two of this chapter.

However, two other respondents, who worked at housekeeping and child care prior to marriage, did not engage in any other type of formal work at any other time in their lives. One of them worked for four years at Grand Falls, while the other did not specify where or how long she engaged in domestic work.

A third respondent [R 2] got married in 1944 at the age of twenty, but as a young girl she engaged in a significant level of paid employment. Her first job was at the Bonavista Cottage Hospital (hereafter BCH), where she worked for two years and earned seven dollars and fifty cents per month. In describing her duties there she said, "I had da help in da kitchen, and help on da ward, help with da laundry, do da nurses quarters upstairs...I was a jack of all trades." She further explained that there was "no mister clean

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<sup>73</sup> More specifically, she was Dr. Helen C. Tulk (nee Spurr). She commenced the practice of medicine at Bishop's Falls, in Central Newfoundland, one month prior to 1941. Her husband, George D. Tulk, was an anaesthetist at the nearby Botwood Cottage Hospital. See John Parsons, "*Tulk, George Davey*," in *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* Vol. V (St. John's, NF: Harry Cuff Publications, 1994), p. 437.

'er nothin' den; most you use den soap suds and Gillett's lye; no Javex 'er nothin' den...cake a Sunlight soap, scrub da floors." She clarified that the staff cooked the hospital meals on a wood stove ("and bank her night time with coal"), but the hospital also had electricity so they had washing machines and dryers for doing the laundry.

This person's next stint of employment turned out to be much more than she bargained for, so to speak, while it also provides a poignant example of how factors other than Confederation—in this instance, WWII—significantly impacted the lives of Newfoundland women. This Bonavista woman took a job at the Halifax Infirmary, in Nova Scotia, which was under the care and operation of nuns, where she performed the same sorts of tasks as she had at BCH. At the Infirmary, she earned twenty dollars a month, which was more than double her previous wage at BCH. This likely reflects the fact that women who worked in war-related/associated jobs received substantially higher wages than they had in pre-war jobs. But, as she describes below, this respondent nearly paid for her improved salary with her life:

I was dere two years. I left da come home and took da wrong train; sat on da train and watched my train go by. I ended up back in Halifax and had da wait two weeks den before I could get another trip out. One da sisters went down with me (to board the train) she said, 'don't talk to no soldiers 'er sailors, dey might carry ya 'way.' Dis fellow came up (to me)—I had a double seat—he asked da sit down; I couldn't say no, I didn't own da seat. He asked where I was goin', I told 'en North Sydney, and he started da laugh. He said, 'you're on da wrong train.' He said, 'give me ya ticket,' he said, 'I'll go see da conductor.' I told 'en no. So he went out and got da conductor; he came in...so I hadda get off at da next stop and go back

da Halifax. **Dat was da night da *Caribou* was sunk.**<sup>74</sup> All my clothes went down; all I had was what I had on. I was lucky...I guess I wasn't da go. (Author's Emphasis)

After this experience, the respondent took a job as a live-in domestic with a family at St. John's, Newfoundland. The family took in boarders, and hired the respondent to help with the laundry, meal preparation, and other housework. Here, she also earned twenty dollars per month, in addition to her lodging. This woman returned to Bonavista, married, and gave birth to her first child at BCH. However, she moved to Central Newfoundland when her husband obtained employment, and raised her family there. She returned to Bonavista in her senior years.

The last two of those interviewees who worked prior to marriage engaged in somewhat different work than the previous five respondents. The older of the two [R 15] worked as a waitress at the Navy Hostel in Halifax for a period of six months, prior to her marriage there to a Navy man in 1943, at which time she was twenty-three years of age. The other respondent [R 13], ten years younger than the above, performed secretarial/book-keeping work: "I was doin' office work...took commercial course at College of Our Lady of Mercy, dat was back in da forties, in St. John's. I finished my

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<sup>74</sup> The *S. S. Caribou* was a freight and passenger ship which sailed to and from Port aux Basques, Newfoundland and North Sydney, Nova Scotia, 1925 to 1942. En route to Newfoundland (October 1942) during WWII the *Caribou* was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine, and only 101 of the 238 people on board survived. Eugene P. Kennedy, "*Caribou, S. S.*," in *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* Vol. I (St. John's, NF: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Limited, First Edition 1981), p. 352.

grade 'leven and went right da work, and den I took my course in da night time." She further indicated that after marrying in 1950, at the age of twenty, she continued to work "for a couple years after" doing clerical work at Bonavista Cold Storage Incorporated (hereafter BCSI).

### Fish Processing at BCSI

The experiences of women who worked in the newly developing enterprise of fresh-frozen fish processing illustrates, once again, that Bonavista residents, both male and female, were significantly affected by events related to the world wars. It was during WWI that "artificial refrigeration" was first used: "...a demand for fresh-frozen fish having arisen in Britain as the supply of northern European fish was disrupted by the war."<sup>75</sup> Near the end of the inter-war years, the first move toward fresh fish processing in Newfoundland occurred at Bonavista marking the beginning of a major economic change effected by the transition from dry-salted to fresh-frozen cod fish processing. More pointedly, this development also signifies the beginning of a new venue of employment for women in the fishery-dependent communities of outport Newfoundland.

As far as sources indicate, it was during the summer of 1939 that Job Brothers of

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<sup>75</sup> Robert H. Cuff, "*Fish Plants and Fish Processing*," in Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador Vol. II (St. John's, NF: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Limited, First Edition 1984), p. 122.

St. John's assumed ownership of a property at Bonavista—reported to be worth twenty thousand dollars—when the original owners went into bankruptcy and their premises were applied as part payment of their debts. Under the management of one Basil French, a second building was constructed across from the existing property and a fresh fish filleting and processing operation was established. The newly formed Bonavista Cold Storage Incorporated is reported to have employed about one-hundred and fifty people in its first few years of operation, generally from the months of June to November, at a rate of pay of ten to fifteen cents per hour.<sup>76</sup>

Two of the respondents worked at Bonavista Cold Storage Incorporated during its first months of operation. One of the women [R 6] worked at BCSI for a brief time in the Fall of 1939, at which time she was twenty years of age. She described the operation as an experimental venture, designed to see how the production of fresh-frozen fish would “go over.” She worked at the makeshift plant, weighing fish, for one-hundred and fifty hours and earned ten cents per hour; fifteen dollars in total. She stated that the fresh fish

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<sup>76</sup> Cuff, “Fish Plants,” in *ENL*, Vol. II, p. 122. Ford Ryan, “A Comparative Study of Three Fresh-Fish Plants of Newfoundland—Bonavista Cold Storage Company Limited, Bonavista; Fishery Products Limited, Catalina; and Arctic Fishery Products Limited, Charleston, Bonavista Bay,” (St. John's, NF: Paper submitted for Geography 3320, Memorial University of Newfoundland, December 15, 1976), pp. 1, 3, 7, 15, 33. Readers may also refer to Timothy Facey, “A Contribution to the Historical Geography of the Fish Plants at Bonavista, Fermuse and Grand Bank, owned by the Bonavista Cold Storage Company, in the Period 1939 to 1976,” (St. John's, NF: Paper submitted to Dr. W. S. Nowak: Memorial University of Newfoundland, December 3, 1976). Wright, “Fisheries Development,” chapters 2 and 4, specifically pp. 47, 50-53, and 148, 165-169, 173-175, also include reference to Bonavista Cold Storage.

was trucked from Catalina to Bonavista for processing during this initial period. Apparently, the venture was a success, according to this respondent's information, as the next year fresh-frozen fish processing at BCSI began in the Spring once the inshore fishery was underway, at which time the operation was moved to a larger building. She also noted that there were three or four other girls working at the tentative plant.

The other respondent [R 4] who was one of the original female employees was only twelve years of age when she went to work at BCSI. She did not mention anything about working during the experimental period, although calculations based on her date of birth (1926) and the age at which she commenced work indicate that this must have been the case. She held this job for nearly eight years, until shortly before she married at the age of twenty. She talked, first, about the circumstances which led to her employment at BCSI. The following excerpt poignantly reveals how the education system and WWII impacted the life of a young girl living in Bonavista, Newfoundland:

You could go da work den, see, when you was twelve. You could stay home from school—you didn't have da go atall—when I was growin' up, you didn't have da go da school if you didn't want to, but now you got da go. I was only twelve years old when I give up school. Pop (referring to her father) went away, and da war broke out; Pop went da Gander...and Mom had (my youngest brother). (My youngest brother) was a lot younger dan us; (my younger brother) and me was growed up. I was thirteen when (my youngest brother) was born, (my younger brother) was ten. When Pop went away she (referring to her mother) used da have da get wood and water—dere was no water in (indoor running water) in Bonavista den see—go to da well, had da go to da store (referring to the wood shed). So I stayed home from school, dat was great....

She further described the actual job which she performed at BCSI, along with the hours of work and the rate of pay. One should recognize that this respondent worked at the facility from 1939 until 1946 and, therefore, it is most likely that the rate of pay outlined below was probably what she received later on as opposed to initially, for which time other reports list a rate of pay ranging from ten to fifteen cents per hour.<sup>77</sup>

I worked at packin' fish, fresh fish, weighing it. Dey use da have boxes da put da fish in, and dey had wax paper, so you had da line dose with wax paper...and I use da be doin' dat too, cuttin' paper fur da put in da boxes. We got twenty-five cents an hour, and it boost to thirty-five after. We worked from Monday until Sunday; we worked Sunday too, no overtime, and we use da get our money...we wouldn't get a cheque, we'd get our money in a envelope. I remembers a long brown envelope...and da highest pay we got fur dat weeks work—we worked Sunday's and all—was about twenty dollars 'er twenty-one, das all you'd get. You'd get a twenty dollar bill see and however much change it was, twenty cents 'er thirty cents, be in da envelope see. You didn't have da go da bank da change no cheque; dere was no cheque. Das what dey use da do.

This description gives some indication of the type of economy and banking system used in Bonavista, not to mention the way payroll and business matters were handled at the time, even though the Bank of Nova Scotia had been opened there since 1903.<sup>78</sup>

Interestingly enough, the interviewee who provided this information opened a business of her own in the community later on during her married life. This aspect of her work experience will be recounted in the next section. Before doing so, the experiences of

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<sup>77</sup> Ryan, "*Three Fresh-Fish Plants*," p. 7 states that the earliest employees earned ten to fifteen cents an hour, and that in 1953 "cutters" were earning sixty-five cents per hour. This job was usually done by male employees.

<sup>78</sup> Sim, "*Site and Function*," p. 27.

other respondents who worked at BCSI will be addressed. To bring to light any changes in these experiences over time, these five respondents will be referred to chronologically from earliest to latest based on when they commenced work at the facility.

The first of the five [R 5] began work at BCSI in 1941 at the age of fourteen. Although she married in 1944 at the age of seventeen, she continued to work during the first two years of her marriage. Thus, she spent a total of about five years weighing fish at BCSI. She noted, however, that while her main task was weighing "you'd work at everything den, but mostly I was weighin'." The next respondent [R 9] worked at BCSI for one season, from June to September, 1942, at which time she was twenty years old. She described long hours of work for which she was paid twenty cents per hour. She recalled that they would sometimes begin work at eight or nine o'clock in the morning, work all that day, and continue into the night until five or six the following morning when the fish was all "put away." She further indicated that during these nearly twenty-four hour shifts, as during regular length shifts, "dere was no drinkin' water" at the facility "only a bucket a water dat someone brought in and put dere." Relating to the present geography and infrastructure of the town, she noted that BCSI operated at the present site of Swyers' supermarket until the plant was built at its present location. Her main task while working at BCSI was skinning the fish, while she also did some weighing and packing. She carefully described two methods of packing the fish in preparation for freezing. In one instance, the fillets were wrapped in wax paper and placed in wooden boxes, while in the other the fillets were layered in steel pans/boxes without being

individually wrapped. She concluded that a significant number of females worked at the facility, and estimated that the number of female employees was nearly equal to the number of males. She stated that male employees worked mainly at deboning and filleting the fish. This respondent did not work in the formal economy of paid employment after this one season. Instead, she married and engaged in dry-salt fish processing in the self-employed, inshore fishery sector.

The next respondent [R 20] spent much less than one season of employment at BCSI sometime prior to her marriage in 1945, at the age of twenty-one. Her own comment on this experience best explains it:

I worked one month, one time, over da fish plant. I couldn't stick it, I got sick. I don't know how anybody works dere now. Da smell comes off 'em when dey comes home is enough. Some people can stick it but I couldn't. I couldn't, my dear, I used da throw up. ... I guess I was twenty 'er eighteen, around dere.

This woman never worked in paid employment again. Her time and energy was channeled into the work of bearing and rearing children. Likewise, the next two respondents did not work in the formal economy after leaving BCSI. One of them [R 12] had little to say about her work experience at the processing plant, which occurred in 1945 when she was seventeen years old. She simply indicated that she worked there “one summer, packing fish and washing da uniforms.”

The last [R 10] of the seven respondents who worked at BCSI prior to marriage did so for two summers—1945 and 1946—at the age of sixteen and seventeen, respectively. She stated that her father got her a job there, and that “you had da be sixteen

years old da be allowed da work dere.” She indicated that she earned twenty cents an hour weighing and packing fish, and that she was “always da first one da be laid off” near the end of the season. She first said that some married women worked there too but then qualified this by indicating that these “married” women were widows.

A report of the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys reaffirms much of the data outlined above. This report stated that there were two-hundred boats engaged in the inshore fishery at Bonavista in the early 1950's, and that fifty percent of the trap season catch and seventy-five percent from the trawling season was being processed fresh at the cold storage facility, while the remainder of the catch was being dried. More pointedly, the report confirms that all fish being processed at BCSI was derived from the inshore fisheries of Bonavista and surrounding communities, and that of the two-hundred employees at the fish plant during the peak months of the operating season, one-third were women. These women were employed primarily from June to October when fishermen were harvesting the bulk of their catch for the year.<sup>79</sup>

Aside from these factual details, however, this government report also made the very telling statement “abundant male labour, female labour hard to obtain.”<sup>80</sup> This prompts one to conclude that although there is evidence that the traditional work roles of Bonavista women were in transition by the early 1950's, these women were still reluctant

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<sup>79</sup> Wood, Bonavista Peninsula, pp. 123-124.

<sup>80</sup> Wood, Bonavista Peninsula, p. 125.

or unable to engage in paid labour which took them away from the household. Thus, the transition from traditional domestic and household work roles to more formal and commercialized workplaces may have begun abruptly with BCSI in 1939, but Bonavista women obviously faced years of adjustment before modern work roles were incorporated into the lifestyle of the community. Nevertheless, 1939 must be stamped as the point at which employment opportunities for Bonavista women advanced and expanded into the modern era. Moreover, combining this information with the employment data of the interviewees, along with their dates of marriage, one is apt to conclude that the politics of WWII probably had a major influence in the lives of women working at BCSI. As noted in chapter two, Miriam Wright has demonstrated that government policy reflected the need for female employment in fresh fish processing during the war years as a temporary condition. After the crisis of war was past, women were expected to take up or resume their “proper” position as wives and mothers who purchased and prepared fish for their family meals, leaving the harvesting and processing of fish to men.<sup>41</sup>

#### Paid Employment During Marriage

In light of the above circumstances, then, it is not surprising that far fewer of the twenty respondents engaged in paid employment during their married lives; only six out

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<sup>41</sup> Wright, “*Images of Gender*,” in Lives and Times, pp. 129-143.

of the twenty women—that is, thirty percent—worked in the formal economy while married and raising children. Of these, two had not engaged in paid employment prior to marriage. Of the remaining four, two worked at BCSI prior to marriage, one took domestic employment, and the other performed clerical work both before and during marriage. Of the four who did work in the formal economy prior to marriage, two opened their own businesses during their married years.

One of the two women who did not work prior to marriage [R 11] operated a boarding house at Bonavista for approximately twenty years; circa 1950 to 1970. She married in 1944 at the age of eighteen and had four children during the years 1945 to 1952. Thus, while she had a young, growing family to care for, she also took on the added responsibility of tending to the needs of boarders. The following description provides some idea of the extent and nature of the work involved in combining paid employment at home with the work requirements of the family and household:

I had da scrub da clothes on da board, bring water and heat it on da stove. We had runnin' cold water but no hot water. I didn't have a washer 'til (my last child) was born in 1952. Dat was a wringer washer, of course. And dere was no pampers when I was raisin' my children; all diapers. I use da keep boarders...I had a licensed boarding house...hard work...all year 'round. Well, I had a wringer washer den, and I use da have da mounties comin', and I use da wash fur dem, and dey didn't have da permanent press shirts den and, you know, puttin' 'em thru a wringer all those creases use da be in dem; I use da spend three hours nighttime ironin', every night.

Despite the time-consuming rigor of this physical labour, there was also an added economic burden involved in this type of employment. The respondent's husband was

mainly employed as a general labourer and did not have a life-long steady job. He worked as a truck driver with Swyers' making deliveries, and at the fish plant as a cutter, to give two examples. Thus, the respondent stated that "sometimes 'twas tough because if you didn't get boarders you had no money comin' in, right."

The other of the two respondents [R 3] who had not worked prior to marriage, began her primary period of formal, paid employment in the latter 1960's when the youngest of her two children was nearing school age. She worked for one summer at BCSI, packing fish, but because the catch of cod fish was low that season, she didn't get many hours of work. She figured that this was probably 1969, or thereabouts. Shortly after this, she secured employment as a cashier with a local business, where she remained for the next twenty-six years. Although she finished working in 1995, in the last couple of years she only worked on a part-time basis, rather than all year long as she had done previously. She combined this part-time employment with Unemployment Insurance benefits to secure a decent livelihood. Her husband was an inshore fisherman for his entire working life, so in the years before she entered the formal workforce, the respondent was heavily involved in the family-based operation of dry-salting cod fish.

The remaining four of the six respondents who worked during marriage also worked prior to marriage. One of these [R 13] engaged in secretarial work prior to marriage and continued to do so "for a couple a years after" at BCSI. Another of the respondents [R 5] worked at BSCI prior to marriage and continued to do so for about the first two years following marriage. Her husband was an inshore fisherman for his entire

working life, and the respondent was heavily involved in the family-based operation of dry-salting cod fish. Then, in the early 1970's, she returned to the formal workforce as a cook at BCH, and remained there for the next twenty years. She stated, "when dey give up dryin' da fish I went da work in da hospital." This is a prime example of the tendency for women to work for the provision of their families, and of the influence and precedence of household-based work and the family life cycle upon their engagement in formal employment.

The last two respondents in this group each established businesses of their own during their married lives. One of them engaged in domestic employment prior to marriage, while the other had processed fish at BSCI. The former, and eldest, of these two respondents will be examined first. This woman [R 18] moved away from Bonavista at the age of eighteen and worked as a housekeeper for a medical doctor at Bishop's Falls. She returned and married in 1946 at the age of twenty-two. She had three children between the years 1948 and 1957. It was in 1958, the year after the birth of her last child, that the respondent started her own business. She began with a convenience/grocery store, and later changed to a fast food take-out and arcade type of operation. The respondent indicated that her husband worked in the inshore fishery for the "first couple a years we was married," but then took other jobs, mainly involving carpentry, with various companies. One of the respondent's children was present during the interview and recalled, with pride in her voice, the years when her mother operated a business: "see

Dad use da work aroun' here; Dad was drivin' truck den. She (referring to her mother, the respondent) had a little grocery store first, and den after use da sell hamburgers and french fries, and got a juke box and games; changed it to a little hang-out."

Some of the interviewees moved in with their parents or in-laws once they married. Some did so for a short time while securing living accommodations of their own, while others remained in the homes of their parents, caring for them in their senior years, and receiving ownership of the extended family household once they passed on. This was the case for the above respondent. She lived with her husband's parents for twenty-two years. In addition to rearing children and operating a business, then, she also shared the responsibility of caring for the elderly parents. She said, "I looked after her (her mother-in-law) too when she got sick. She died in August (of 1968) and we moved in St. John's in September. I closed up da store." Again, this is an example of how family responsibilities mediated women's availability for formal employment.

Once they moved to St. John's, where the respondent's husband obtained employment in carpentry with *Stokes*, the respondent also engaged in both formal, paid employment outside of the household and paid work within the household. First, she was a member of the cleaning staff at St. Luke's Home, where she remained for about four years. Then, she worked in the staff lunchroom at Woolworth's for "four years 'er more." Moreover, her daughter said, "and when we moved in St. John's she had a boarding house and was workin' too." The respondent said, "yes, I had four 'er five boarders with dat...all dat crowd (from Bonavista) use be goin' university, I had all dem...and I use da

work too." Finally, the respondent indicated that when they moved back to Bonavista, she worked as a bartender for four to five years, at two different establishments; at the local motel when it initially opened, and at a local restaurant and take-out for about one year after that.

The last [R 4] of the six out of twenty respondents who engaged in formal employment during marriage had also worked prior to marriage for a number of years, processing fish at BCSI. Shortly after marriage, she took a job in her brother's store. Later, she moved elsewhere in Newfoundland where her husband had secured suitable employment. During this time she did not work outside of the home but took in boarders. Her husband became ill and they returned to Bonavista. Then, she started her own business:

When I worked with (my brother) 'twas only a low pay, I use da only get thirty-five dollars a month. I worked da fish plant 'til just before I got married, and after I got married I went da work again; I use be workin' all da time, went da work with (my brother). Den when (my husband) took sick I started my own store down dere see. I started a restaurant down dere. When we came home, well (my husband) was sick and he had da quit his work, so we had nothin'. We use da sit down and we'd cry...and dis is no good da be at dis, 'tis no good da cry, but we couldn't help it because (my husband) had a job. He had a job dat he'd be transferred, he was gonna be transferred da Labrador City; he was transferred from Grand Falls to Baie Verte and now he was gonna be transferred da Labrador City. And he kept da telegram in da dresser dere for a number a days, weeks I s'pose, and anyway da doctor told 'en he couldn't work no more, so we use da sit down, we was gonna starve da death. So he couldn't go, he was turned down. When we came home, well, I said I'll have da do something. I couldn't very well go da plant again because I'd have da leave (my husband) all day long, and 'tis sa far here from da plant, you know, you'd have da carry ya lunch, and dere was no way I could leave 'en 'cause I use da have da feed 'en sometimes with a spoon, and he use da be in bed. He

was in and out St. John's but dere was nothing dey could do. So, anyway, I'll invest a bit a money I said now (to my husband), and start a restaurant...well, how in da world is us gonna do dat (he asked). Well, I said, **you got da try**, if you don't try...**God helps those who helps themselves**. So, anyway, I started dis little small place down dere.  
(Author's Emphasis)

This respondent was adamant in her rejection of social assistance. She strongly felt that it was her responsibility to provide for herself and her family, rather than seek government welfare payments, despite her husband's illness.<sup>82</sup>

#### Post-Marriage Employment

The last phase of life during which three out of twenty respondents—fifteen percent—engaged in paid employment occurred after their married lives had ended. In two of the three cases the women took employment after their husbands had died, while in the third instance, the respondent asserted her independence, left her marriage and Bonavista, and took employment in St. John's. One of the oldest [R 1] of all twenty respondents, born in 1911, married a man who was twenty-seven years her senior. Thus, when her husband died in 1958, at the age of seventy-five, the respondent was only forty-eight years of age. Her husband was an inshore fisherman and a carpenter, and she worked as a member of the shore crew throughout their thirty year marriage. Thus, the

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<sup>82</sup> She talked, at length, about her establishment of a take-out/hang-out/ games room, the problems involved with such an operation, and about her confrontations with the health inspector. This is attached as Appendix F, and bluntly reveals her attitude toward the social assistance program.

respondent was upwards of fifty years of age when she engaged in paid employment, outside of the household-based, inshore fishery, for the very first time. She said, “after me husband died, see, I had da get out and work... ‘cause when he died I had da kill a cow da pay fur his burial, das true...awful hard times, ya know.” While married and raising her family, the respondent resided at Lance Cove<sup>43</sup> and worked with her husband in the inshore fishery operation. After her husband’s death, she moved from Lance Cove to Bonavista and worked as a live-in housekeeper. When her employer died he did not leave a will, and his brothers told the respondent that she could remain living in his house for as long as she wished. After this, she worked as a domestic with a local medical doctor for over three years. As far as she could recall, she was paid about fifty dollars a month. She further indicated that she also engaged in free-lance house cleaning to earn extra money. She once earned thirty-five dollars, for example, as payment for cleaning a house from top to bottom, so to speak. She also sometimes received clothes as payment for her work: “some people give ya clothes; well, I be tankful wit dat, a bit a clothes.”

The next of the three respondents who worked after marriage [R 7] had also worked for eight years prior to marriage in various domestic and related jobs. Her husband was self-employed for several years. Before they married he owned and operated a tinsmith shop at Bonavista. In 1960, he started a supermarket but only worked there for a few years before he passed away at the young age of forty-five. The

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<sup>43</sup> Cadigan, “*Marginal Agriculture*,” p. 11 noted that Lance Cove is “...a now-resettled community located three miles outside of Bonavista....”

respondent explained: “first he had a tinsmith shop, tore down dat store den right next to it and built a supermarket; only built three years see when he died (in 1963). He had da tinsmith shop when I was goin’ out with ‘en.” Thus, with young children to support, the respondent took over the business and also took in boarders. After a few years, however, she sold the business:

I kept it goin’ fur so long, had trouble with it...(my youngest son) was only young when his father died, and so was (my youngest daughter/child). I use da live out dere in dat house out dere; dat big house right dere when you come in da lane. I had nine bedrooms in dat house out dere. I use da have four ‘er five boarders dere. I use da have a lot a boarders. I had three ‘er four mounties use da take deir meals in dere. Dey (mounties) stayed out to da public building den see; right across from da post office dere, and dey use da come across fur meals.

The last of the three women [R 11] who worked in paid employment after marriage did so as a result of separating from, and eventually divorcing, her husband. She left Bonavista in the early 1970’s and went to St. John’s, where she worked at Ayre’s/Giant Mart for the next eight years. This is her description of that particular work experience; her first and only period of paid employment in the formal workplace:

I was on da coffee bar; da last ting in da world I wanted ‘cause, I mean, I left da boarding house, right. And I went in and I said, well, I’ll take whatever I can get now, and I went on da coffee bar makin’ sandwiches and hot dogs and drinks and milkshakes and ice cream and coffee. So I use da be alright dere, like, when da two of us’d be dere but dinner time/lunch time when you’d want somebody da other girl was gone. And I’d be dere and da whole counter be lined up and dey all want toasted sandwiches and **we only had a toaster with two slices**. We’d make up our sandwiches in da morning and put in da fridge, like tuna fish, ham and cheese, and egg salad, and we’d have a lot a sandwiches made up, you know, what we think we’d sell, and dey all want toasted ones. And be so warm dere, if I could only get out and let da rain come down on me, das

how I felt. But I was only dere a year and da personal supervisor, Miss Mercer—I use da take her home some evenings—and I use da say to her Miss Mercer is dere anything else you can get fur me da do without being on da coffee bar, I said, I rather not be dere. I said I tell ya where I like da get, down in da receiving room. You know, goods come out and you had da check it off, I loved dat. So after awhile da girl down dere was transferred...I was some glad about dat. So I went down dere. I was off every Saturday. Most I use da do was fashions...well you had da mark down da number and you had da mark down da code and da size and da color and da cost price and da selling price...so I use da love dat; when six a clock come I didn't want da go home. And on da coffee bar I hated it because das all I was doin' home (Bonavista) see, cookin'. Where I worked first was out on Churchill Square, Giant Mart...I worked out to Giant Mart for about six years I s'pose 'er seven, and den all da receiving rooms were closed and Ayre's closed out downtown, and dey took da store for one great big receiving room, had it in different departments...divided in three equal parts. I loved dat, loved it. Das Ayre's store, you know, but dey called it Giant Mart see, dat was Ayre's too. And den we were moved downtown in Ayre's old store and dey had all da receiving rooms dere. (Author's Emphasis)

This particular woman's experience once again reiterates and enlarges one of the prominent themes of the historiography discussed in the previous chapter. That is, women's employment during the first half of the twentieth century was characterized by a cyclical pattern wherein women worked in the formal workplace prior to marriage, some continued to work after marriage until they had children, then they juggled additional informal paid work which did not take them away from the household with childcare and other domestic tasks. Some married women later re-entered the formal workforce once their children reached school age, or older. Finally, other women engaged in paid employment after being widowed or, as was the case with the above respondent, as a result of divorce; which was somewhat uncommon at the time. For the most part, then,

these women worked out of economic necessity to secure a livelihood for themselves and their families.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> This conclusion complements that reached in the historiography of women's work patterns in industrializing economies presented in chapter two of this work. Readers may also see Theresa Heath Rodgers, "*Helpmates and Secondary Wage Earners: A Comparative Historiographical View of Women's Work in Newfoundland and Canada*," Paper Presented for History 6200 seminar (St. John's, NF: Department of History, Memorial University of Newfoundland, April 18, 1996), pp. 3-24.

#### **Chapter 4 - “My Dear, I Done A Ocean A Work”: Technological Transitions in the Household Economy**

The extent and variety of work performed by women at the informal and household level added significant value to the income of Bonavista families. Some women had a direct hand in their family economic status through their engagement in paid employment outside of the household—as indicated in the previous chapter—while others did so through their work in the family-based process of dry-salting cod. In both instances, these women simultaneously contributed to the household budget through subsistence agriculture and other budget boosting activities, such as knitting and sewing clothing for the family. These household-based work activities are the subject of this chapter. The first section focuses on women’s work in the processing of dry-salt fish in the inshore fishery, the second looks at women’s work in subsistence agriculture, while the remaining sections examine such domestic work as food purchase and preparation, housecleaning and washing clothes. The chapter also documents the types of household appliances and facilities, or lack thereof, which women had at their disposal, and provides some indication of how these items changed and/or improved from the 1930’s to the 1960’s. To a large extent, then, it highlights the transition from a traditional merchant credit and subsistence economy to a cash and wage economy, as well as the shift from manual to technological methods of doing housework which resulted from the introduction of early labour-saving devices. Although women’s work in fish processing

is separate from these other tasks, in that it directly contributed to the credit and cash income of the family, it is examined along with other household work because (a) the timing and performance of virtually all other tasks was dictated by the requirements of the fishery, and (b) women did not directly receive payment for their work in the form of merchant credit, cash, or unemployment insurance; all of it was issued to their husbands.<sup>85</sup> Thus, fish processing was treated as just another of the woman's household responsibilities.

#### Inshore Fishery Shore Crew

Since Bonavista was still very much a traditional outport Newfoundland community based on the inshore fishery in the 1930's and 40's, it is not surprising to find that many of the respondents were involved in the dry-salting of cod as young girls, helping their mothers and aunts spread fish onto the flakes; and as wives, taking a direct role in processing the family catch of cod which provided their livelihood.<sup>86</sup> In fact,

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<sup>85</sup> Antler, "Fishery Families," pp. 2, 4. Also, Wright, "Images of Gender," in Lives and Times, p. 143 notes that this was the case until 1980 when UI was extended to women who fished with their husbands.

<sup>86</sup> For a detailed description of this work see Mark Ferguson, "Making Fish: Salt-Cod Processing on the East Coast of Newfoundland - A Study in Historic Occupational Folklife," M.A. Thesis (St. John's, NF: Department of Folklore, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1996). Also, Nicole Power, "Women, Processing Industries and the Environment: A Sociological Analysis of Women Fish and Crab Processing Workers' Local Ecological Knowledge," M.A. Thesis (St. John's, NF: Department of Sociology, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1997), chapter four, pp. 76-100.

sixteen out of the twenty respondents—eighty percent—engaged in this type of work at some time. Of these, six did so only before marriage but at no other time, one did so both prior to and during marriage, while another nine respondents processed fish during marriage.

### “Making Fish” Before Marriage

Some of the respondents who processed fish as young girls did so for a brief time and/or only to a small extent, while others were more actively involved on a more necessary and more permanent basis. One respondent [R 20] spent most of her teenage years helping with the family fishing operation: “...I had three brothers, and me father went fishin’. I use da help Mom; help me mother make da fish, all summer long. **We worked fur nothin’ den; work, no pay.** (Author’s Emphasis). My mother use da wash it out and I use da help her carry it out and stuff’ like dat; do it on da flake.” Likewise, another of the women [R 7] helped to cure fish while growing up. She explained that she helped to carry the fish to the flakes using a fish/hand bar<sup>87</sup> and then spread it: “...bring up fish on fish bars, you know...when I was growin’ up; I was only ‘bout thirteen `er fourteen years old den.” Another of the respondents [R 15] also helped her father to wash

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<sup>87</sup> See G. M. Story, W. J. Kirwin, and J. D. A. Widdowson, eds., Dictionary of Newfoundland English, Second Edition (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 23 indicates that the term “*bar*” can be used to mean barrow. Further entries for “*fish barrow*” and “*hand barrow*” on pp. 177, 237-238, respectively, describe this item as “a flat, rectangular wooden frame with handles at each end for two [wo]men to carry cod-fish....”

and spread fish, along with assuming much of the responsibility for the domestic requirements of the household. Her mother died at a young age, and the respondent was an only child, so she and her father had only one another to rely on. The fourth woman in this category [R 14] also helped to spread fish onto the flakes and take it in, to a smaller extent than those above, while she was growing up. Similarly, the other two respondents were only minimally exposed to the work of fish curing. One of them [R 10] stated that she would “put out” fish for the man next door while she was growing up. The other respondent [R 13] described her experience in this way: “my friends, deir families were into da fishery and I used da jus go with my friends and help. My father worked on da railway so we didn’t have nothin’ da do with da fishery, so I used da do it fur a lark. help dem.”

The last respondent in this group [R 9] was heavily involved in curing fish both before and during marriage. She explained that she washed the fish, “lugged” it to the flakes, spread it, and “took it up.” She did this with her father’s operation before she was married, and continued to do so with her husband’s operation for about twenty years (circa mid-1940’s to mid-1960’s). She mentioned that it was common to be “makin’ fish” until eight or nine o’clock at night. Moreover, her experience vividly indicates how some women devised some very innovative approaches to the double work roles of child care and market-oriented work. As such, this respondent indicated that she would take her

first child—born in 1944—down to the beach in a carriage so that she could keep an eye on the child while she worked on the flakes spreading fish; tying the child securely into the carriage, and putting a screen over the carriage to keep flies off.

### “Making Fish” During Marriage

There were nine out of the twenty respondents—forty-five percent—who worked at curing fish during their married lives. Like those who cured fish as girls, some of the married women were members of the shore crew of the inshore fishery for many years, while others only did this work for one or two seasons: two of the nine women cured fish for a short time, while the remaining seven did so for a range of fifteen to thirty years. Of the two interim cases, one [R 6] indicated that her husband went fishing for a few years, and that he had his own long liner. Thus, the respondent and her husband’s aunt worked as a shore crew, curing the catch. The respondent said that she “cut throats, washed out” the fish, brought it to the flakes and spread it. Similarly, the other [R 4] of these two respondents spent just one season curing fish: “one summer I made fish. (My husband) had da salt his fish and I made it. (My son) was only a small boy den. He couldn’t get no work so he went fishin’ with his father, and he kept his own fish and I made dat...jus spread it.”

The next seven respondents all spent more than a decade of their lives, at minimum, curing fish each season. Each of their husbands was a self-employed

fisherman, partnered with other family members such as fathers, sons, brothers, or uncles. The respondents, addressed here from eldest to youngest so as to trace any change in women's processing of dry-salted cod, worked on the shore, curing the catch. Also, four of the seven engaged in formal, paid work—aside from curing fish—at other times during their lives. One worked as a domestic after the death of her husband, another worked in this capacity prior to marriage, a third worked at BCSI and a local store during marriage, and the fourth worked at BCSI before and during marriage, and later at BCH during marriage.

The oldest [R 17] of these respondents engaged in the fishery for about fifteen years, dating from approximately 1935 to 1950, at which time her husband left Bonavista and engaged in a different type of work elsewhere in Canada. The respondent described her role in the family fishery as follows: “we washed it (referring to the cod fish) out, we never salted it ‘er split it ‘er anything, da men did dat. But we did wash it out, and we use da take it to da flakes, and make it on da flakes, my sister and me.” This respondent was the only one of the seven who had hired help to care for her children while she engaged in fish processing: “I had a girl, servin’ girl...I never took dem on da flake.” The next respondent [R 1] worked in the fishery for about thirty years; from the time she married in the late 1920's until her husband's death in the late 1950's. Her husband engaged in the fishery with his three brothers, and she worked with the other two wives performing the on-shore tasks. She stated that they, the shore crew, worked in the stage as well as on the flakes. She further indicated that while some families moved to certain fishing areas

during the season, her family did not: "people used da go down dere (Lance Cove) fishin' in da summertime and come up (to Bonavista) in da winter, but we used da stay winter and summer down dere, dat was our home." The next respondent [R 19] commenced curing fish after her marriage in the early 1930's. She stated that she worked "night and day" when "at da fish." She said that she "washed out" fish, carried it to the flakes using a hand/fish bar,<sup>88</sup> and spread it. She clarified, however, that she did not help to carry the fish when she was "in da family way." She further stated that when her mother "use be down Red Cove makin' fish," she would wait until her children were asleep, and then she would go and help her mother to process the fish.

The two following respondents began curing fish toward the mid-1940's. The first of the two [R 16] stated that they lived "down da Cape" during the summer months while engaged in the fishery. She stated that she would gut and clean fish, wash it out, carry it to the flake on a hand bar, and spread it. She also said that she continued to work at fish curing during her pregnancies. Similarly, the second respondent [R 8] said "I use da wash it out and carry it in on da flakes...and help 'em (the men) put it on da tables da do (cut throats, head, gut, and split)...all while dey was fishin'." Another [R 5] of the respondents worked at curing fish for about twenty years, from the late 1940's to the late 1960's. Her husband fished with his father and brothers. The respondent worked in the

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<sup>88</sup> Refer again to Story, Kirwin, and Widdowson, eds., *Dictionary*, pp. 22, 177, 237-238.

stage as well as on the flakes: “I was da head. We used da wash it and carry it out on da flake and spread it, and make it fur it da dry.”

The last respondent [R 3] also cured fish from the latter 1940's to the latter 1960's. Her husband fished with his brother and brother-in-law, and the three wives worked at curing the fish. Hers was the most detailed explanation of “making fish” and it gives an indication of how the work of curing fish impacted other facets of women's work and their lives:

...summertime we use da go down Lance Cove—little place called Lance Cove, but 'tis no families dere anymore now—move down in May, come back last a September 'er October. I use da put 'em (referring to the fish) on table and cut 'em down da gut, and my husband use da split 'em, den somebody else be saltin' 'em. We (women) be always on da flake workin' and da men dey'd be gone out to da traps. ...And how we lived dagether down dere was: (my husband's) sister lived in one end, in da kitchen; (my husband's) brother lived in da front room; and I took da long porch and made a bedroom and a kitchen outta 'en. So, was three families in one; 'twas a two storey house.

She also pointed out that she still had the responsibility of caring for her young child while she worked on the flakes, since it was not common practice to employ babysitters and most people could not afford serving girls:

use da tie 'en onto da fence 'cause was all cliffs down dere; tie 'en on with rope out in da yard where I could see 'en. He'd go da length a da rope and dat was all. Den you want da take 'en, you bring 'en up on da flake and put 'en into a big puncheon tub, was called, and you carry 'en down and put 'en in stage with ya, you still put 'en in a puncheon tub down dere and he'd stay dere. You had to...you be on da flake takin' up ya dry fish, and you had da watch 'en, you couldn't keep 'en tied on all da time, no way.

Women's work in the family fishing enterprise gradually became non-essential as the fishery was increasingly commercialized. Trawlers, fish dryers, and fresh frozen fish replaced the "homemade" product of the small boat industry cured by women. Likewise, children were placed with babysitters while their mothers left the household to take up formal employment in the fish plant.

### Subsistence Agriculture

Apart from helping to provide for their families through their essential labour in the production of dry-salted cod, Bonavista women were also largely responsible for producing, purchasing, and preparing food for themselves and their families. In fact, all but two of the twenty respondents stated that they engaged in subsistence agriculture during their married lives, and some were continuing to do so at the time of the interviews. Moreover, it is also likely that the two [R 1 & R 16] who did not exactly state that they were involved in this activity actually were, and it was an oversight on the part of the researcher that they were not specifically asked about this and, thus, did not mention it of their own accord. It is obvious, then, that engaging in the added work of subsistence agriculture was not something that only fishing families, or the women of fishing families, did. Rather, almost all of the women interviewed helped to grow their own vegetables, and nearly fifty-percent also raised some animals, regardless of what

other types of work they performed or what their husband's occupation was.<sup>89</sup>

Half of the eighteen respondents who engaged in subsistence agriculture kept some animals as well as growing vegetables, while the other half grew vegetables but did not raise any animals. The eldest of the first group [R 17] indicated that her family grew potatoes, cabbage, turnip, beets, and parsnip; and raised pigs, goats, and sheep. She explained that raising animals added to the financial maintenance of the family in that goats, for example, provided both milk and meat. She indicated that milking the goats was one of her tasks. Likewise, this informant explained that sheep provided meat for the family in the form of mutton and/or lamb, while the wool was used to knit certain items of clothing for family members. This respondent described how she would "shear" the sheep (that is, cut off the wool), wash the wool, and then "card" and "spin" it. This process rendered black wool and white wool, based on the colour of the sheep, and she made grey wool by combining some of the two. She said that she made her own wool until 1950, or thereabouts, and that she was at least sixty years old before she stopped keeping animals and making hay; sometime during the late 1960's. It is significant to note that the respondent's husband died in 1952, at which time she had three children who were then ages seven, seventeen, and eighteen, respectively. Thus, she continued to produce for their needs. Another of the oldest respondents [R 7] said:

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<sup>89</sup> Cadigan, "*Marginal Agriculture*," pp. 2, 13 argued that supplementary farming was historically "...an integral part of the local economy" and was "...just as important...as were flakes, staves and slips."

yes, grew all our vegetables. We had cows and hens. We had goats home; before I was married. I had a lot a hens, and two roosters. I wouldn't touch 'em. My sister'd take da hens and chop da heads off 'em; and my other sister killed da sheep. Da cows, I used da sell da cream, and make da fresh butter.

This is another example of a means by which extra money was added to the family budget via a task which could be juggled with existing work at the household level. The informant estimated that they discontinued their agricultural pursuits in the late 1950's or early 1960's, at which time her husband started a new business which took them away from the household and required all of their time and attention.

The next respondent [R 9] noted that subsistence agriculture required a significant amount of time and hard physical labour. She said that her family grew potatoes, turnip, carrot, and cabbage, while there were some years when they also kept a pig and killed it in the Fall. In her words, "das how people got by and could survive on less money. You couldn't sit down den when you like." She described the various requirements of gardening in which she engaged from trenching the ground, sowing the seeds, spreading capelin onto the beds to provide fertilizer, to digging the vegetables during harvest time. She said that she continued to grow her own vegetables even after her husband died, but she stopped doing so in the early 1990's because she could buy enough vegetables to meet her needs more cheaply than she could grow them.

Another respondent [R 18] said "everybody reared deir own vegetables den: turnip, carrot, cabbage; used da grow everything den, beets. We used da sow da garden shore (sure) even jus before we left da go away (in the late 1960's), use da set potatoes."

Moreover, this respondent, who lived with her in-laws from the time of her marriage until their death, also indicated that her mother-in-law kept some animals for the family: “she use da have goats and sheep. We didn’t; I didn’t, mother-in-law did. Das before I was married, but after I was married too.”

The next respondent [R 10] stated that they grew potatoes, turnip, carrot, cabbage, and parsnip; and that they sometimes kept pigs. This woman and her husband also raised a large family which meant, of course, that they had a lot of mouths to feed, as the saying goes. The respondent jokingly described the added work and stress that she endured as a result of experiencing twelve pregnancies while continuing to engage in subsistence agriculture: “...out in da garden sowin’ potatoes and risin’ three ways—hot and bloated in da face, fingers sore and swollen, and pregnant; all da same time.” She also recalled that when her sixth child was born, in 1954, the resources of her family were already taxed. Nevertheless, at that time she proclaimed, “I won’t give her away s’pose I got da feed her on a capelin.” She indicated that when the majority of her children were growing up and still living at home, there were years when the family grew as many as eighty-five sacks of potatoes. She said that they grew large amounts of vegetables into the 1980’s until most of their children had left the family home; once the children left, they grew smaller quantities of their own vegetables.

The last of those respondents [R 3] who kept some animals in addition to growing crops stated that her family kept cows, goats, and hens. She also said that they grew turnip, carrot, parsnip, cabbage, beet, potatoes, “everything except broccoli and stuff,

when you was makin' fish you never had time fur dat." She emphasized the demanding nature of engaging in both the fishery and subsistence agriculture for men and women alike:

In da Fall a da year while da men was gone fishin' you'd go in and dig up so much vegetable ground (i.e. harvest) and put it (the crops) in da bags, and when da rnen come in in da night den, dark, dey'd go in with da hand cart and bring it out, dark, with lanterns. So it wasn't all pleasant.

When specifically asked if this changed after Confederation, she said that they continued to keep some cows into the 1950's and, as for growing vegetables she said that the family was "still growin' 'em now." She explained that their family vegetable grounds are located at Lance Cove and that her son had taken over the responsibility of producing some of the food needs for the family. She said "we had growed last year (1996) a hundred and some odd sacks a potatoes." This amount provided for extended family members in more than one household, as well as "givin' away to dis one, dat one, and someone else."

Another three of the respondents stated that they grew vegetables but did not keep any animals other than hens. One of these women [R 6] said that they grew mainly potatoes, turnip, and carrots while they were raising their children, but did not keep any animals apart from "a few hens." She and her husband were still growing their own potatoes, carrots, cabbage, and onions at the time of the interview. Another [R 8] informant confirmed that her family grew only potatoes and no other vegetables—"das all,

jus potatoes”—and that they did not keet any animals other than “a couple hens.” One of her children was present during the interview and stated:

well, when we (she and her siblings) were in high school we use da grow ‘em den. I’d say probably in da seventies we give ‘em up ‘cause it wasn’t worth it. Da ground, I s’pose, was all worked too much and you couldn’t get nothing out of it. Dere was a lot a work involved in it. It was jus sa cheap da go buy ya own.

Similarly, the last of these three respondents [R 19] worked in the gardens, but said that her family did not keep any animals, other than hens, because there simply was not enough time available to tend to them. She highlighted this circumstance in stating that she worked in the garden while her children were asleep in the house, and she would run in periodically to check on them.

#### Subsistence Agriculture: Vegetable Production Only

Another nine of the respondents engaged in growing crops for the family, but did not keep any hens or other animals. Two of these respondents indicated that they were continuing to grow their own vegetables at the time of the interview, but had never kept any livestock or poultry. Furthermore, they both indicated that their own parents had kept animals while they were growing up. One of these [R 12] simply said “my father had animals,” while the other, one of the youngest [R 13] of all the respondents said:

Dad brought home a little calf one time da have da kill in da winter for our meat—we used da buy an animal da be killed, or quarters a meat, for our winter meat—and we got so attached to da calf we wouldn’t let Dad kill it in da Fall; my brother and my sister, we cried and cried and cried. ... And mom used da have hens and we had our own eggs growin’ up.

These women further indicated that they grew the basic, staple vegetables which provided the maximum quantity for the family. One woman [R 15] said that they also grew their own savory “when we could get it da grow.” Her son continued to cultivate the family plot at the time of the interview, but was not producing the many barrels of various vegetables that the interviewee and her husband did while their seven children were growing up. She concluded, “while dey were growin’ up we grew a lot, we had to, girl.”

The remaining six respondents who grew crops mentioned reasons why they stopped doing so at specific times in their lives. One woman [R 11] said that her family grew their own potatoes and bought the other types of vegetables, but gave up even the potatoes around 1950. At this time, she started a boarding house and, along with continuing to bear and rear children, she was unable to “tend” to the gardening. Two others indicated that they stopped producing due to ailing health. One [R 2] said that she gave up after most of her ten children were grown and moved out of the family home because she could no longer endure the physical demands of the task due to illness and aging. Similarly, another lady [R 4] explained, quite vividly, how age, illness, other work responsibilities, and specific female circumstances compelled her to discontinue subsistence vegetable production:

Yes, first when I got married I use da grow potatoes, cabbage...and I sowed vegetables after (my husband) got sick, potatoes and dat, but finally I had da give up; I wasn't able da do it. Because 'tis not only sowin' 'tis keepin' up fencin' and weedin' and everything else. I was fifty, I believe, when I give it up. I was on change a life, I use da get dizzy; I use da have da hold on to da counter down in da shop...so finally I had da give it up, 'twas too hard.

The next two respondents indicated that they grew some of their own vegetables, as well. One [R 20] said that her family grew “mostly carrots and potatoes, but other things we used da buy.” She further indicated that “’twas only couple years ago...only da past five ‘er six years we give it up.” This is quite remarkable in light of the fact that she raised fifteen children. Similarly, another woman [R 14] said that they grew potatoes but bought all their other vegetables. Again, with a family of nine children, time was probably difficult to spare, and producing a large quantity of the one vegetable which they ate the most of was, no doubt, the best strategy for their particular needs. The respondent concluded that they stopped growing potatoes in the early 1980’s because her husband was sick and unable to help with the work, and because most of their children were grown and gone from the family home; so they “didn’t need sa much” of any food items anymore. Finally, the last of the respondents [R 5] discussed several reasons why she stopped growing some of her own vegetables in the early 1960’s:

We did grow vegetables, like carrot and turnip and cabbage and potato. We use da sow it dagether, with my mother, but when she died it wasn’t da same. You could buy it den more, like in da stores; you could go and buy vegetables. But da farmers always did come here: you’d buy extra in da Fall ‘cause be a long winter and in da Spring you wouldn’t be able da go and buy no vegetables in da Spring; you had da buy it in late in da Fall, like November month, da tie ya over.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> This reference to the purchase of vegetables from visiting farmers emphasizes that many Bonavista residents did not have enough arable land to grow all of their own vegetables. Also, Wood, *Bonavista Peninsula*, p. 123 notes that there was only one full-time farmer at Bonavista in 1945; along with one at each of nearby Lancaster and Elliston Junction. Furthermore, Cadigan, “*Marginal Agriculture*,” p. 21 states that there were only two commercial farmers on the Bonavista Peninsula in the early 1950’s.

This interviewee also indicated that although she did not keep any animals after she was married, her own parents did so while she was growing up.

Since only five respondents indicated that their parents or in-laws kept animals, and only five respondents kept animals other than hens, it seems that keeping animals was a practice which was already fading out in the late 1940's and early 1950's. Collectively, the respondents have indicated that the time and work involved in subsistence agriculture, and the lack of arable land, along with soil depletion, eventually led people to either scale back or totally abandon their efforts to supply some of their own food needs. Moreover, when fresh produce, both vegetables and meats, were available for purchase in the local shops—rather than from Peninsula farmers only—the necessity of producing for the family decreased; especially when family size was small and the cost of store bought produce was less than that grown at home. This data provides significant evidence that this sector of the traditional economy had entered a period of transition at least by 1960.<sup>91</sup>

#### Food Purchase and Preparation

Aside from their work in producing some of the family food needs through subsistence agriculture, Bonavista women also assumed most of the responsibility for the

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<sup>91</sup> Cadigan, "*Marginal Agriculture*," p. 22 noted that "...about forty percent of the households [in Bonavista] surveyed in a 1970 study still raised their own vegetables and livestock." He concluded that farming has continued, to a significant extent, to serve as an income supplement despite the consumer, purchase-oriented economy and the availability of social welfare.

family diet, namely food purchase and preparation. When the majority of the respondents married and began having children in the early to mid-1940's, they had a limited *variety* of foods to choose from and, often, a limited *supply* of those that were available, depending on their family income and how much they could afford. Several of the women recalled the types of groceries which they purchased at the local shops during the mid-twentieth century, and many also compared this to present-day circumstances. The twelve out of twenty respondents who talked about purchasing groceries at the local merchant establishments will be presented based on their date of marriage, from earliest to most recent, so as to more easily recognize differences in availability and purchase of items over time. Of course, it must also be recognized that some women purchased different, more, or less of certain items according to their own specific needs and/or circumstances, but there is a recognizable commonality in the responses.<sup>92</sup>

The first [R 17] of the twelve women very simply stated that the main groceries which she purchased, following her marriage in 1934, were butter, sugar, milk, and flour. The next three respondents all married in 1943. The eldest of these women [R 15] indicated that items such as meat, sugar, butter, and tea could be purchased "loose" in specified measured quantities, whereas flour was bought in one-hundred pound sacks and did not become available in seven pound bags until more recent years. The next [R 9] informant stated that sugar and flour were available in fifty and one-hundred pound sacks

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<sup>92</sup> Murray, *Fifty Percent*, pp. 119-131 describes the work involved in feeding the family in great detail, and includes preparations for special occasions such as Christmas.

(she did not clarify if she meant both or respectively), and that she also purchased butter, pork, beef, and tinned beans; as well as dried beans and peas, rice and rolled oats—mostly “loose”—and big boxes of biscuits by the pound. She further stated that she could not recall being able to buy items like bologna or ground beef. She said, “we never had no casseroles ‘er nothin’ like dat, but we had hearty meals; fish and beans and vegetables and soup.” The daughter of the youngest of the three [R 8] who married in 1945 spoke on her mother’s behalf:

molasses and tea and pork and salt beef, butter and sugar; most a dat was bought in da Fall a da year, den dat had da do all winter. But, now, da smaller tings like, I s’pose, can milk and can beans, and peas—everything was weighed out den, like peas and beans, all dat stuff—you’d buy dat as you’d need it. Most a da meats den was bought at Harris’, Norm Harris’, ‘cause dey were butchers, right.

The next two informants both married in 1944 and are only one year apart in age, but one was the wife of an inshore fisherman while the household income of the other was non-fishery based. The latter did not engage in subsistence agriculture, and this posed another difference in the experience of purchasing groceries for her as compared to her counterpart. This informant [R 11], who kept boarders as opposed to “making” fish, related her comments to present grocery items:

well, you couldn’t get those frozen dinners and all dat kind a stuff, and pizza and stuff like dat. We use da buy a roast a meat, a roast a pork, and salt meat and vegetables, and ham and bacon and eggs, and cereal fur da children—you couldn’t get sa many kinds den as you can now; sa many kinds on da go now you don’t know what da get—like corn flakes and rice krispies and puffed rice.

Obviously, families that engaged in subsistence agriculture did not have to buy as much, if any, vegetables at the shop, nor would they buy eggs if they kept hens, or beef if they kept a cow, and so forth. Also, families engaged in the inshore fishery probably had added types of fish in their diet to a greater degree than those who were not so employed.

This being said, the respondent who worked in the family fishery [R 5] discussed the type of diet which she and her family lived on, and related it to the fishery, merchant credit, and family size:

Dere wasn't too much fruit; da only time you'd get fruit would be da summertime. You'd have dry fruit, like dry apple and dry apricot, stuff like dat, fur da winter. And den we use da have our own jams; we use da go burry pickin' and have bakeapple, partridgeberry, blueberry, and make jams for the winter. And you'd have raisins and prunes and stuff like dat, you know, dere wouldn't be no fresh fruits like dere is now. You wouldn't get no turnip in da summer, stuff like dat you know, 'til it get big enough in ya gardens. It was a difference, **now you don't have da provide for anything, jus go and pick it up.** In da Fall a da year when you had ya money you'd buy in supplies fur six 'er seven months 'er longer. In da Fall da farmers use da come around, like down from Musgrave Town, and dey be sellin' potato and turnip and cabbage, and you'd get ya cabbage and you salted it fur da winter 'cause it wouldn't keep, you know, would get frosty in da winter months. You'd salt accardin' to ya family, maybe some people used da salt a full barrel a cabbage. And people use da have salt herring, pickled herring, and turbot, and you'd have ya fish, das how you'd make up ya winter's food. You wouldn't have fresh fish, you had no way a keepin' it; be all salt, even salmon, you'd have salt salmon. ... When dey'd go to da merchants, da fishermen would have some expense, company expense like twines and tar fur deir traps and dat, and pitch fur deir motor boat, and dey'd pay fur dat, and den dey'd share up what was left over between da crowd, and each family'd go and buy what dey want. Now some had big families and some had small families, so anyone with a big family would want more dan I would with only a small family. Each one would have deir share and you could do what you like with dat. Everyone got equal. (Author's Emphasis)

Thus, families employed in the inshore fishery relied more heavily on merchant credit, and on their own production, harvest, and preservation of both vegetables and fish, than did non-fishery families, especially when their particular employment circumstances dictated otherwise.

The next two women, both of whom married in 1945, also mentioned certain items that were not available for purchase in local shops at that time, and related this to the lack of convenience grocery items included in diets now as compared to the work involved in preparing foods then. One of the women [R 3] said that she could only purchase “ordinary tings like butter, sugar, tea, milk, biscuits...no such ting as goin’ in and buy a can a ravioli, ‘twas nothin’ like dat den. We use da buy in barrels a beef fur wintertime, sacks a hard bread and tings like dat, whereas now ‘tis all packaged up.” The other respondent, who had a very large family [R 20], described the hardship that she and her family experienced due to lack of availability of certain food items in local shops combined with the possibly unpredictable outcome of subsistence vegetable production. She indicated that she made bread “every day except one,” and recalled one year when she had to make even more:

well, you always had plenty a potatoes da do ‘til da Fall da year’d come agin, but ‘twas one summer we didn’t; dey never grew ‘er something another. Anyway, you couldn’t go in da shop and buy ‘em den either. We use da eat pea soup and bread and stuff like dat. Flour use da come den in hundred pound sacks. I made up a hundred pound sack in seven days; **we had no potatoes, we eat more bread.** (Author’s Emphasis)

Again, the significance of this statement is realized when the amount of time and physical labour involved in making bread, and baking it in an oven fired by wood and/or coal, is considered.

The next two respondents also commented on the lack of availability of nutritional foods, specifically fresh fruit. The first of these [R 18] said that she purchased

canned fruit... oranges and apples, stuff like dat, not too much a dat around den. You'd be waitin' den fur it da come in; you go to da grocery store 'er supermarkets you'd be waitin' for it da come in, not always plentiful. Like, you buy a seven pound bag a flour now, you had da buy da full sack, fifty pounds (then).

She further noted that there were "no soft drinks den, (only) syrup or lime juice."

Similarly, the other informant [R 4] noted the need for more nutritional foods, the difference in packaging and preservation of foods in local shops, and attitudes toward this:

We had no fruits, you couldn't go in da store and buy a package a grapes. You'd only get a barrel apple, scattered time you'd get dem. Fruit, you couldn't get it, you couldn't get nothin' den. You get a piece a meat, I remembers Swyers' use da have it down dere, use da have it all sawed up on a big board, and you go dere and pick up ya meat not wrapped. You wouldn't be able da do dat now, everything is wrapped now, everything is sealed. I don't know how people survived. If we got something in da fridge now we'll take it and throw it out, we's afraid da eat it. But dey days, no fridges...make a pack a jelly and put 'en in da well, lower da bucket down in da well fur da get it stood. Da vegetables don't taste da same. Years ago, I remembers when Mom and dey use da grow deir own vegetables and dere was a wonderful taste, and a good smell from it when it be cookin' but 'tis not da same now.

The final two respondents who talked about grocery shopping are the youngest of all twenty respondents, and the last two of the twenty to marry. However, their experiences of providing food for the family do not seem to be much different from those

of the older women who had married and started their families in earlier years. One of these respondents [R 14] only mentioned purchasing beans and fresh meat at the grocery store, but also noted that “dere was always fish da get” which significantly added to the family diet. Likewise, the last of these women [R 13] stated “it was nothing compared to what you can buy now. Fruit, grapes and stuff, we only saw dat at Christmas time. You could get oranges and apples, and canned fruit. And, of course, we grew our own vegetables.”

The responses of these two youngest interviewees reiterate the common themes that were brought to the fore in this section: Bonavista women purchased bulk, staple foodstuffs at local shops, and added fish, poultry, pork, beef, mutton, eggs, milk, and vegetables—much of which they either raised and/or harvested with their own hands—to make up the family diet. They substituted fresh fruit with dried fruits which they bought and with local berries which they picked and made into preserves. Moreover, they made and baked their own bread and other pastries, since very few store items were ready-made as they are today. In short, they worked to turn “rough” food into a basic diet which provided daily meals for themselves and their families. However, the data analyzed in this section also indicates that this aspect of the traditional economy of Bonavista was indeed in a state of flux by 1960. By this time, people were depending less on their own productive efforts to supply the food needs of their families, and more on the local grocer to make these items available for purchase. Of course, this lifted a fairly large burden of

work from the shoulders of women and freed up a significant amount of time in which they could engage in other activities, namely paid employment.

### Washing Clothes and House Cleaning

Apart from their work in provisioning for the family food requirements, two other major tasks which women performed at the household level included upkeep and cleaning of the home and doing the laundry. The respondents referred to the latter task, more specifically, as washing clothes. This reflects the fact that most of them did not have washing machines, and none had clothes dryers, during their earlier years of marriage. In fact, only one of the twenty respondents had a washing machine when she first got married; the others all used a scrubbing board and washing tub for at least the first few years. Moreover, some of the women did not have running water in their homes, and those who did only had cold running water, so they had to heat water on a wood or coal burning stove. Also, some did not have electricity, and those who did only had lights, not electric heat or appliances. The following excerpts describe the experiences of Bonavista women in performing the household tasks of cooking, cleaning, and washing clothes, while also indicating changes in the products, appliances, and facilities with which they completed them. These selections highlight, again, the degree of work and time required for the completion of housework and, in turn, how labour-saving devices such as the

washing machine removed a significant level of time-consuming household work demands from women's lives.<sup>93</sup>

Most of the women talked more about washing clothes than about any of their other domestic chores. This was probably due, in part, to the circumstances under which they performed this task, and to the actual process of washing clothes which was mediated by them. Most of the respondents indicated that *Sunlight* soap was used as a laundry detergent, as did the following woman [R 5] before describing the procedure of washing clothes, along with the changes in the type of appliances which Bonavista women used to complete this task:

Some people use da make deir own soap but I didn't. And you had Gillett's Lye for whitening.<sup>94</sup> **It'd take ya all week with ya clothes** 'cause you'd wash it and you'd put it out and dry it, den you'd bring it in and den you'd blue it, starch it, and den next day you'd iron it. You'd be three days with a line a clothes. Now you can't get it done fas enough. When I looks at it now I can see how foolish it was. First when I was married, wash clothes with da scrubbin' board and tub, and had da bring water from, you know where da public building is now, well I used da have da go up dere with a barrel and a cart da bring water down to here, and hot it fur da wash clothes (on a wood and coal stove). I had da galvanized tub and da glass wash board. I didn't even see a wooden wash tub because my mother had a old fashion washin' machine. My mother had a wooden washin' machine with pedals on it and you'd pedal...and dere was a wringer on dat tub, a hand wringer. Den it went from dat den to she had da galvanized washin' tub and da wash board, and I had da same after I got married. (The wooden washer) wasn't hand made, it was bought. It was a wedding gift

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<sup>93</sup> Murray, *Fifty Percent*, pp. 112-118 again describes these chores in much detail.

<sup>94</sup> Reference to this product is made in John K. Crellin, *Home Medicine: The Newfoundland Experience* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), pp. 134, 148, 157, 231.

to her, her husband give her as a wedding gift, dis washing machine. Das da only one ever I did see like it. Das what he give her: a washing machine and a foot (sewing) machine, and a 'lectric heater, 'cause dey had da lights; das seventy-one years ago (circa 1926). Now was not too many houses had it but dey was on da main road. I never did have da lamps up, I always had 'lectricity. (Author's Emphasis)

This interviewee figured that it was not until the late 1950's or early 1960's that she got her first washer; an electric wringer washer. Another woman [R 6] indicated that she got her first washer in 1951, after the birth of her third child. She specified that it was a *Hotpoint* wringer washer. She noted that she still had to "hot water" on the wood stove as she had when using the wash board and tub, but that this improved later on with the addition of "a hot water boiler onto da stove."

Another respondent [R 18] recalled that she had used a glass scrubbing board and a galvanized tub for washing clothes. However, while chatting about the various scrubbing boards with her daughter, who was also present during the interview, the respondent said: "I still got (my mother-in-law's) wooden one out dere now. Gee whiz, dat must be a hundred and fifty years old." I mentioned that there was evidence that some women may have used aluminum scrubbing boards and the respondent's daughter said "I saw one like dat before." The respondent described her first washer as follows: "I had one a dem with da agitator in da middle, da one with da wringer on top, das da first one I had. Da first washer I had my father gave it to me. I know da kids were in school." Given that her youngest child was born in 1957, then, it was not until the early to mid-1960's that this woman got her first washing machine.

It seems, therefore, that Bonavista women first used wooden washing tubs and then galvanized ones, and that they progressed from wooden scrubbing boards to aluminum and then glass boards. Aside from the wooden washing machine owned by the mother of one of the respondents, as described above, the electric wringer washer was the first type of washing machine owned by the vast majority of the interviewees.

All of the twenty women interviewed used cloth diapers for their children.<sup>95</sup> Two of these, who had quite large families, discussed this in conjunction with the use of the scrubbing board and tub. One of the women [R 20] had fifteen children in total and, in addition to making bread six days per week, washed clothes and diapers using a scrubbing board and tub until the early 1950's:

I had five (children) before I got a washer, dat was da old wringer washer, you know. Dere was seven of us. I use da scrub on da old board. I only lost one day every week dat I didn't wash and dat was on a Sunday. And on Monday when I get up I wouldn't know where da look, da stink and everyting else could almost take ya breath away. I use da have five, six peein' in da bed every night. Every night, now. ... 'Twas terrible, but nothin' you could do about it. I wouldn't want da re-live it, I'll tell you.

Similarly, the other woman [R 10] stated that she washed "on a washin' board, with seven youngsters." Another [R 14] had the last child of all respondents in 1967, and still used cloth diapers. She said "I wouldn't put (pampers) on a baby."

Another respondent [R 17] provided information on the use of "blue" in the washing process, along with additional details on the different materials that washing tubs

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<sup>95</sup> Refer to Appendix G: Diapering.

and scrubbing boards were made of. Again, she indicated that she did not have any specific detergent for washing clothes: "No, not as I know fur; we use da use soap. We use da buy a little pack a blue, 'bout a inch square, put it in a piece a cloth and tie a string aroun' it, and dis is what we use da put in our clothes fur da whiten it." She clarified that she would dip the blue into the laundry water in the washing tub, which would "take da yellow cast off da clothes and make it white." She further noted that she sometimes spread certain items, such as white table cloths/linens outdoors on top of the grass as a means of whitening them. The respondent also clearly stated: "we use da wash our clothes with our hands 'cause was no washers dem times, see." She also indicated that she first used a wooden washing tub and progressed to a galvanized tub later on, but that she always used an aluminum scrubbing board: "not a wooden one, not tin, but what would ya call it, like 'luminum. I don't tink I had a glass one; dere was glass ones after, later on, but I had da 'luminum." The youngest child of this respondent was present during the interview, and said: "I dare say I was, what, eighteen 'er nineteen, no I was older dan dat; I guess I was twenty when she got da 'lectric washer, a wringer washer. Yes, I was every bit a twenty when she got dat one." This dates the respondent's first washing machine to 1965.

The next respondent [R 3] described the work and juggling involved in washing clothes, preparing meals, and working on the flakes to help process the family catch of cod fish:

When we were livin' out Lance Cove in da summer dere was no electricity; we had lamps. We had washboards; scrub boards scrub da clothes on, we had wash tubs. You had ordinary (i.e. wood) stove and you had da go cook ya dinner on dat stove and bake ya bread in dat stove with wood. Das all you had years ago, even when we used da come up here (Bonavista) wintertime we had electricity but dere was no such thing as electric stoves and washers; you still had ya washboard and ya tub. When I was home, a little girl, we had electricity but no washers 'er dryers 'er fridges 'er nothing. There was no javex, nothin' like dat den. You had can a lye den fur puttin' in clothes. You put dat into a big pan, enamel pan, 'er a bucket and put it on ya stove and put lye down in da water, and den you put ya clothes, like 'twas stained up, like cup towels and things like dat 'twas stained, and you boil it on da stove, whereas now you put it in javex now and no foolin'. After I was married dere was some kind a suds called Rinso, where 'tis called sunlight and tide now, 'twas rinso den. ... when you were livin' down Lance Cove summertime, see, you used da have da get up when da men go on fishin' four a clock and get ya clothes, get it washed so you'd be ready go on da flake by seven. While you was washin' well you hadda try da get something fur a meal, like cook ya meats, salt meat and dat, and try da have something fur 'em time dey get in from fishin' ... 'cause perhaps you wouldn't get back in da house no more fur hours once dey came in with a load a fish. Den when we come up here in da Fall a da year, 'specially when (my son) start goin' school, we use have da go down (Lance Cove) in mornings, put out flakes a fish, stay down all day until in da evening...walk da Lance Cove, (my sister-in-law) and me, and make da fish and put it out; stay down dere all day long and walk back in da evening agin...cook (my son's) dinner and put 'en out in da porch fur 'en.

The next respondent [R 4] reflected on the difference in washing clothes and house cleaning in the eleven years between the births of her two children, and during her mother's time as compared to her own early years of marriage, and to the present. She recalled the first type of laundry detergent which was available for purchase at Bonavista, as well as the convenience brought to her life when she got a washing machine and, then, the change which Javex added to the task:

With (my first child, 1947), get up eight a clock in da morning with a washin' tub and a scrubbin' board and you be dere 'til twelve; a mornings work da do ya clothes. With (my second child, 1958), you had ya washer, and you could make ya bed and wash ya dishes while ya clothes be washin'. **Dere's no housework da do now like dere was years ago.** Mom had a stove and stove polish, and after ya stove was polished da soot be everywhere, and den dere was da white panel doors, and you had da clean ya doors...and all da vases and all dat, you had da clean all dat down. Friday's das what you'd do...but dere's nothing like dat now. We only had sunlight soap and libby, libby soap I believe 'twas. I never seen Mom make much soap but dey use da make lye soap, Mom did make a little bit but not much. But we use da have dis libby soap and we use da have sunlight, and we'd have a scrubbin' board. Dere was wooden scrubbin' boards, dere was glass scrubbin' boards too, and den we had lye, tin lye, and we had a big scald pot: you'd scald ya clothes dere in da lye. We had wood and coal, das what we use da burn. But after dat den dere was da *Alcrest* stoves came out, but dey was wood and coal too; dat was our range. Mom had a *Alcrest* stove, I had a one too after I got married. I remembers first when da Rinso came out, I was livin' over da (my father-in-law's), and da next door neighbour...came in dis day and she said, I got something da tell you, she said, and, she said, dere's stuff now you can put in ya water and, she said, tis good fur washin', she said, 'tis good fur ya clothes, Rinso 'tis called, dey's gonna demonstrate it up da Orange Hall. So we went up da Orange Hall and dey demonstrate da Rinso. Now dat was da first soap suds come around here in Bonavista. And den, I remembers about da Javex; we used da have lye see and we have da scald our clothes. So (my neighbour) was talkin' about da Javex, and she said all you got da do now, maid, is put ya clothes in hot 'er cold water and, she said, it soaks out da dirt. And **we was fixed with da Javex** ya know because da javex was good, and 'tis still good now but 'tis all kinds a javex now.  
(Author's Emphasis)

The three previous accounts regarding the task of washing clothes for the family highlight a progression from homemade, lye soap; to store-bought Libby and Sunlight brands of soap; to a laundry detergent known as Rinso. They also indicate that there was a move in stain-removing and/or whitening agents from lye which had to be boiled; to blue which was simply dipped into the wash water; and then to Javex bleach which was the most

effective and easiest product to use for both purposes. Like the transition from scrubbing boards and tubs to washing machines, the various laundry products gradually lessened the amount of time and physical labour required to clean the family laundry.

One of the twenty respondents [R 15] married at Halifax, Nova Scotia, had her first child there, and continued to live there for about three years before she and her family returned and settled at Bonavista. In stark contrast to the above descriptions, this woman lived in an apartment; so while her counterparts at Bonavista were washing clothes by hand using a scrubbing board and tub, she brought hers to a Laundromat. Again, this evidences the fact that Newfoundland lagged behind other areas of Canada, even with regard to the advent of household technology.

Aside from first using sunlight soap for washing clothes, Bonavista women also used sunlight soap for washing dishes, cleaning floors, and so forth. One informant [R 9] simply said that she used sunlight soap "fur everything." She further explained how she would break the soap into smaller pieces and dry it until it hardened so that it "lasted longer and you didn't use sa much." Another woman [R 11] said "you couldn't buy dish detergent 'til later years. We had a thing you put sunlight soap in, had a handle on it, and you put it in da hot water and make suds fur washin' dishes." A third respondent [R 10] further explained that "you'd cut off a piece (of sunlight soap) and put in a wire rack dat you swished around in da water."

Some of the respondents indicated that the first product which was available to them as a cleaning and disinfecting agent to add to the water for cleaning floors was one

known as Jeyes' Fluid.<sup>96</sup> One woman [R 3] noted that it was dark brown in color.

Another [R 5] said that she used sunlight soap, but "some people used Jeyes' Fluid; I didn't use nothing like dat, I didn't like da smell of it." She commented further that "you only had canvass down (on the floors) den—and you'd clean da canvass—and a hand-hooked mat by da bed da keep ya feet warm when you get up and put on ya clothes. I use da hook mats den, hand-hooked mats, da put agen each bed." Another informant [R 7], reflecting on the change in doing housework, said "...now dem pluggin' in dis and pluggin' in dat; nothing like dat, you'd do it all with a cloth and water. I can remember goin' upstairs and cleanin' up da rooms and cleanin' down da steps...no mops." Similarly, a second respondent [R 9] said "now 'tis all push button, but we had da do everything by hand. I often tinks how we survived, but our parents worked hard." Again, these statements echo the tradition of hard work which followed from one generation of Bonavista women to the next. However, they also contain clear evidence that changes were taking place in women's performance of household tasks by the mid-twentieth century.

#### Making Clothes, Knitting, and other Budget-Boosting Activities

In addition to the variety of work outlined above, the majority of the informants also engaged in knitting and sewing clothes for their children, and sometimes for

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<sup>96</sup> References to this product are also found in Crellin, Home Medicine, pp. 231, 157.

themselves.<sup>97</sup> One woman [R 11] pointed out that her first child was born in 1945 while the WWII was still on-going, and said “you couldn’t buy any children’s clothes; I use da make all deir dresses.” She continued this work after the war and into the 1950’s: “I use da knit deir sweaters, and I’d make deir dresses, and little suits, little boy’s suits, and knit socks...and I use da make quilts, like quilts for deir cribs, you couldn’t buy none anyway. When dey go da bed I’d pull out da machine and go right da town, spend every night at da machine.”

Similarly, another respondent [R 3] explained that she made some clothes for herself as well as for her first child, who was born in 1946:

We use have da make all our own clothes: make our slacks outta flour sack bags and dye ‘em da get a pair slacks. You’d get flour in hundred pound bags den, flour sacks dey were called, and you whiten out da letters on ‘em, big letters use be stamped on ‘em, so you do dat with da can a lye and you have ‘em white. Den you cut out ya slacks and you dye ‘em whatever color you wanted; navy, black, brown, ‘er blue. Use da dye clothes all time den...use da dye clothes fur hookin’ mats and dat; different colors fur put in mats when you be hookin’ em. Years ago, when we was married first (1945) was all dresses; you was in da garden you had a dress on.

She further indicated “I use da have da make everything fur (my first child); ‘til he got up big ‘fore you could get clothes fur children, dem days.”

Another of the interviewees [R 17] knitted articles of clothing for her children using wool which she processed from the sheep that she kept herself. She used to shear

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<sup>97</sup> Again, consult Murray, Fifty Percent, pp. 25-31 for descriptions of these activities.

(cut the wool off) the sheep, wash it, then card and spin it. Then she would knit socks and mitts when the wool was in its finished form. She explained that if she wanted grey wool she would mix wool from the black colored sheep with the white. She stopped making her own wool early in the 1950's when her youngest child was about five or six years old. This woman also made some clothes, such as coats for her two oldest children. She sometimes had clothes given to her, and she put patches on older, worn clothes to make them wearable for a while longer. She even put taps on boots. She commented that she was willing to do anything rather than **“go over on da hill da get welfare.”** (Author's Emphasis).

In addition to the three instances outlined above, another eleven women specifically indicated that they engaged in some knitting and/or sewing, and some also mentioned darning, so as to clothe themselves and their children. In total, then at least seventy percent of the respondents worked to provide clothing for their families. Like most of their work activities, though, this too also gradually decreased and became less of a necessity in the list of women's domestic chores.

In light of the above descriptions of Bonavista women's work in the household-based, inshore fishery, subsistence agriculture, shopping and meal preparation, housecleaning, and making and washing clothes, it is almost an understatement to conclude that they did indeed complete an ocean of work; and such was the case for the wives of non-fishermen as well as fishermen. The identification and analysis of these

aspects of women's work, along with the tracing of how these changed over time, moves a considerable distance toward placing a dollar value on the contribution that women's household-based work made to the budget and economic survival of the family. As yet, historians have only estimated the monetary value of women's work in the processing of dry-salted cod; the data gathered in this research, however, opens the possibility of doing so for those less market-oriented, household-based jobs done by women. Finally, the volume of work produced by these women gains significance with an examination of their reproductive work, and their role in childcare and family health, the subject of the next chapter.

## **Chapter 5 - From Midwife and Bedroom to Doctor and Hospital Ward: Transitions in Women's Reproductive Labor and Family Health**

In addition to the tremendous measure of work performed by Bonavista women in paid employment, fish processing, and household maintenance, they also assumed the primary responsibility for bearing and rearing children. In their reproductive work, as in their productive work, Bonavista women experienced major changes during the years 1930 to 1960. This chapter examines some of the areas and ways in which Bonavista women's reproductive and health-related experiences shifted from a traditional community medicine setting to a more modern institutionalized setting throughout this period. It looks at the move from bedroom to hospital ward, from midwife to doctor, and from home remedies to medical prescriptions. This examination of the transition from traditional to modern reproductive and health care practices also provides some of the general history of health care in Bonavista, as it identifies the doctors and midwives who worked in these capacities at the time, gives first-hand accounts of women's experiences at the hands of these care-givers and, finally, outlines some opinions and reflections offered by the interviewees about the level of health care available to Bonavista residents in the latter 1990's.

### Summary of Births, Miscarriages, Stillbirths, and Childhood Deaths

The twenty women who participated in this study, taken as a group, gave birth to one-hundred and seventeen babies over the thirty years generally spanning 1935 to

1965.<sup>98</sup> Of these, only three children died: in one case a set of twin girls died at the age of three from the suspected cause of meningitis, while in the other case a boy of three years, five months also died of meningitis. In addition, there were four cases of miscarriage among the twenty respondents, only one of still birth, one case of infant death due to complications during childbirth, and one of nearly immediate infant death of twins. These particular cases will be identified throughout the following presentation of the birthing experiences of the respondents beginning with the first and earliest birth and continuing in chronological order, according to the year in which each woman gave birth to her first child, up to the latest year during which the last informant had her first child. In each instance, there is some discussion of prenatal care, pregnancy and birthing complications if there were any, as well as identification of the midwife and/or doctor who presided over the birth and, sometimes, respondent commentary on these lay and medical care givers.

For the most part, the majority of the twenty respondents did not have any actual prenatal care or consultations with a midwife or doctor throughout their first pregnancy. However, the need for a doctor was clearly realized by the respondents during the late 1930's. Throughout the 1940's and 50's, when most of these respondents' children were born, the doctor was increasingly relied on for the birth of children and, to a lesser extent, for prenatal care. In fact, eight of the twenty women were attended by a doctor for the

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<sup>98</sup> Refer to Appendix E: Summary of Respondents.

birth of their first child, while six others started with a midwife who then called in the doctor, and only the remaining six gave birth to their first baby solely with a midwife. In addition, only two of the twenty gave birth to all of their children with a midwife alone, while seven did not have a midwife for any of their births but, instead, had the doctor for all of them.

### Bonavista Health Care History

The informants identified five different midwives and five doctors who attended them at the births of their children. The midwives were Eliza Abbott, Rebecca Abbott, Kate (Abbott, Power) Hayward, Sarah Ann Keel, and Patience Pardy. The doctors were Dr. Robert Forbes, and his son, Dr. Alec Forbes, Dr. Arthur Rutherford, Dr. John Heath, Dr. Christos Gregoriou, and Dr. Penelopi Gregoriou.

In addition to those doctors mentioned by the interviewees, medical and parish records show that many other doctors practiced medicine at Bonavista during the time period under investigation. Many of these were newly graduated and registered physicians who worked in the community for a short time having been listed there in one year and moved on by the next.<sup>99</sup> Even though Bonavista residents had a permanent physician at hand for several consecutive years, dating from the late eighteenth century,

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<sup>99</sup> Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (hereafter PANL), MG 619, Box 1: *Newfoundland Medical Registers* 1915, 1929-1930, 1933-1935, 1937-1939, 1941-1960, and *Newfoundland Medical Directories* 1961-1981.

they also spent considerable periods of time during which medical service was much less accessible and/or not available at all.

Members of the Bonavista Historical Society have indicated that the first physician at Bonavista was Dr. John Clinch, who practiced there from 1775 to 1783 and then relocated to Trinity. He was succeeded by Dr. John Mayne who practiced at Bonavista until 1811. Dr. James Oakley also arrived at Bonavista early in the 1800's and died there in 1829.<sup>100</sup> They have also confirmed that Dr. John Skelton, born Yorkshire, England in 1791, operated a full-time medical practice at Bonavista from 1815 until his death in 1859.<sup>101</sup> His son, George Skelton, born at Bonavista in 1826, "received his medical training in Scotland ... (and) returned to Newfoundland to take up a medical practice at Greenspond, which included the entire north side of Bonavista Bay." He died at St. John's in 1920.<sup>102</sup> Whereas John Skelton was stationed at Bonavista, his son George was stationed at Greenspond; and therefore not as readily available to Bonavista residents as was his father.

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<sup>100</sup> Telephone interview with Marguerite Linthorne (in consultation with Gordon Bradley), July 22, 1999.

<sup>101</sup> Robert H. Cuff, "Skelton, John," in Robert H. Cuff, Melvin Baker, and Robert D. W. Pitt, eds., Dictionary of Newfoundland and Labrador Biography (St. John's, NF: Harry Cuff Publications, 1990), p. 314.

<sup>102</sup> Robert H. Cuff, "Skelton, George," in Robert H. Cuff, Melvin Baker, and Robert D. W. Pitt, eds., Dictionary of Newfoundland and Labrador Biography (St. John's, NF: Harry Cuff Publications, 1990), p. 314.

The first of the doctors mentioned by interviewees, Robert E. Forbes, came to Newfoundland "in the late 1860's as a clerk in McMurdo's Pharmacy" located in St. John's. He left again to study medicine, then returned to Newfoundland in the mid-1870's and assumed the practice of John Skelton's son, Dr. George Skelton.<sup>103</sup> Family records held by the Bonavista Historical Society indicate that Robert Forbes married Elizabeth Cowan at St. John's on November 13, 1876. Also, Bonavista Baptism records show that a daughter, Grace, was born to Robert Edward, M.D., and Elizabeth Forbes on November 22, 1877.<sup>104</sup> Newfoundland Medical Board records indicate that Robert E. Forbes was stationed at Bonavista in 1894, when doctors were first registered in Newfoundland. Thus, he practiced medicine at Bonavista for some forty years. Forbes was born at Montrose, Scotland in 1849 and received his medical degree from Bowdoin Medical College, Maine, in 1874. He died at Bonavista in 1918.<sup>105</sup>

A son of Dr. Robert E. Forbes, born at Bonavista in 1891, received his medical degree from McGill University in 1913 and was licenced to practice at Bonavista in the same year. He was Dr. Chesley Alexander Forbes, and was known to the respondents

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<sup>103</sup> Robert H. Cuff, "Forbes, Robert E.," in Robert H. Cuff, Melvin Baker, and Robert D. W. Pitt, eds., *Dictionary of Newfoundland and Labrador Biography* (St. John's, NF: Harry Cuff Publications, 1990), p. 111.

<sup>104</sup> Telephone interview with Marguerite Linthorne, July 22, 1999.

<sup>105</sup> PANL, MG 619, Box 1: *Newfoundland Medical Register, 1915*, and Box 2: *Register of Newfoundland Medical Board, Vol. I, Registration Record No. 10*. Note that Cuff, "Forbes, Robert E.," in *DNLB*, p. 111 states that he "completed his medical studies in Scotland."

simply as Dr. Alec. He was the first chief of staff of the Bonavista Cottage Hospital, a position which he held for approximately ten years. He also continued in private practice in the early 1950's, and died at Bonavista in 1956.<sup>106</sup>

Records also show that Dr. Arthur Edward Rutherford, born London 1874, received his medical degree at McGill University in 1900, and was registered to practice medicine at Millertown, Newfoundland in 1901. He took up general practice at Bonavista in 1902 and continued in this capacity for more than thirty years. He died of typhoid fever, November 1938, and was buried at Lethbridge, Bonavista Bay.<sup>107</sup>

Dr. John William Heath, born at Sussex, England in 1906, received his medical training in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1937, and was registered to practice medicine in Newfoundland in 1938. However, he did not take up practice at Bonavista until 1949.

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<sup>106</sup> PANL, MG 619, Box 1: *Newfoundland Medical Registers, 1915, 1956*; and Box 2: *Register of Newfoundland Medical Board, Vol. I*, Registration Record No. 210. Telephone interview with Marguerite Linthorne, July 22, 1999.

<sup>107</sup> PANL, MG 619, Box 1: *Newfoundland Medical Register 1915*, and Box 2: *Register of Newfoundland Medical Board, Vol. I*, Registration Record No. 86. PANL, *Newfoundland Vital Statistics*, Box 35, Book 13, p. 17, No. 17. "Rutherford (sic), Arthur Edward, M.D., C.M." in R. Hibbs, ed., *Who's Who in and from Newfoundland, 1927* (St. John's, NF: R. Hibbs, 1927), p. 155; "Rutherford (sic), Dr. Arthur Edward," in R. Hibbs, ed., *Who's Who in and from Newfoundland (Second Edition), 1930* (St. John's, NF: R. Hibbs, 1930), p. 176; and "Rutherford (sic), Dr. Arthur Edward," in R. Hibbs, ed., *Who's Who in and from Newfoundland (Third Edition), 1937* (St. John's, NF: R. Hibbs, 1937), p. 157.

He became a member of the Newfoundland Medical Board in 1964, and continued until retirement in 1971. He died at British Columbia in 1984.<sup>108</sup>

Finally, Dr. Christos G. Gregoriou, M.D. University of Athens, 1958; and Dr. Penelopi Gregoriou, M.D. University of Athens, 1965, were both provisionally registered, under section 32 of the Newfoundland Medical Act, to practice medicine at Bonavista from 1967 to 1971, consecutively.<sup>109</sup>

For the most part, then, Bonavista residents had the services of at least one and sometimes two physicians at their disposal throughout the time period being studied. (The interviewees were primarily attended by Dr. Alec Forbes and Dr. John Heath). The 1921 Census Return for Bonavista recorded that there were two doctors in the community in 1920, and although the Bonavista Cottage Hospital was opened in 1940—as part of a general construction of such hospitals in several Newfoundland communities which started with Commission of Government in 1934—there were still only two doctors

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<sup>108</sup> PANL, MG 619, Box 1: *Newfoundland Medical Registers, 1939, 1950, and Newfoundland Medical Directories, 1964, 1971, 1972*; and Box 2: *Register of Newfoundland Medical Board, Vol. II, Registration Record No. 407*. "Heath, John William," in J. R. Courage, ed., *Newfoundland Who's Who 1961* (St. John's, NF: E. C. Boone Advertising, 1961), p. 27; and "Heath, John William, M.B., Ch.B.," in James R. Thoms, ed., *Newfoundland and Labrador Who's Who, Centennial Edition, 1967-68* (St. John's, NF: E. C. Boone Advertising, 1968), p. 107. "Cottage hospital pioneer dies," *The Evening Telegram* (August 10, 1984), p. 2.

<sup>109</sup> PANL, MG 619, Box 1: *Newfoundland Medical Directories, 1967-1971*.

practicing at Bonavista by 1945.<sup>110</sup> Considering that Bonavista's population consisted of upwards of four thousand people in the 1930's, 40's, and 50's, it is obvious that two doctors could not possibly meet the varied medical needs of all residents.<sup>111</sup> In fact, Janet McNaughton has pointed out that Newfoundland's Commission government estimated that the ratio of doctors to the general population, excluding St. John's and Conception Bay, was one to seven thousand (1:7000) in 1936. Thus, she concluded that "...no doctor could actually serve that number of people...(and) sheer volume of work (in outlying areas) made independent midwives a necessity."<sup>112</sup> Despite this, and the fact that BCH patients had to pay a fee for each visit to the doctor, according to one 1945 government report, there is little doubt that the birthing experiences of Bonavista women had entered a period of transition during the five years since the hospital had opened, given that maternity cases comprised fifty percent of all admissions at BCH in 1945.<sup>113</sup>

Thus, the birthing experiences of the majority of the women being examined herein occurred largely within that transitional phase when the trained medical doctor and the hospital institution began to take preference and precedence over the lay or granny

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<sup>110</sup> *Census Returns of Newfoundland and Labrador*, 1921. Hodgson, "Bonavista," in *ENL*, p. 214. Nevitt, *White Caps*, p. 265. Wood, *Bonavista Peninsula*, p. 121.

<sup>111</sup> *Census Returns of Newfoundland and Labrador*, 1921, 1935, 1945, 1951, 1956.

<sup>112</sup> Janet McNaughton, "The Role of the Newfoundland Midwife in Traditional Health Care, 1900-1970," Ph.D. Thesis (St. John's, NF: Department of Folklore, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1989), p. 38.

<sup>113</sup> Wood, *Bonavista Peninsula*, pp. 121-122.

midwife and the application of traditional home remedies. Indeed, concerns regarding the health of the Newfoundland populace were initially raised during recruitment and enlistment for WWI, when officials found that nearly half of the eligible men were in poor health, and subsequently had to be deemed unfit for service.<sup>114</sup> Prenatal and infant health also became an issue of concern at this time and steps were taken toward improving the situation. In 1920, for instance, the Child Welfare Association established a Midwives' Club and in the winter of 1921, for the first time in Newfoundland, some thirty-five women enrolled in a three month midwifery training course. According to McNaughton, most of the women who trained with the Midwives' Club were widows from St. John's, the majority of whom practiced exclusively in the St. John's area.<sup>115</sup> The bulk of birthing mothers in the outports, then, continued to be attended by granny midwives who did not have any formal training. At Bonavista, this was the case for several years following the establishment of the cottage hospital.

There is a paucity of information available on the women who practiced midwifery at Bonavista from the years 1930 to 1960. In all likelihood, none of them had any formal training in either midwifery or nursing. One local resident has indicated that certain women often accompanied doctors when they attended births, and took over the

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<sup>114</sup> Nevitt, *White Caps*, p. 119. Chapter 6, pp. 120-145 focuses exclusively on the influence of WWI on health reform in Newfoundland from 1917 to 1923.

<sup>115</sup> McNaughton, "*Newfoundland Midwife*," pp. 28, 36, 52, 81, 88. More specifically, pp. 40-86 examines the conditions of midwifery in Newfoundland and the impact of health reform on the practice of midwifery. Nevitt, *White Caps*, p. 126.

care of the mother and newborn after the doctor had delivered the child. As such, they learned the art of midwifery by watching the doctor, and eventually began presiding over the births on their own. In fact, this became a necessity when the doctor was called away from the immediate vicinity on a more serious matter, and since “a baby doesn’t wait” local women who were “born with” the ability or “gift” to perform this manner of work took up their calling.<sup>116</sup>

There is no evidence that Bonavista midwives during this period kept any records or journals pertaining to their work. It is quite possible that some of them may not have been able to read or write, and that those who could had only a low level of education. In fact, a look at their marriage records (held by the Bonavista Historical Society) revealed that all five of the midwives listed here signed their marriage contract with a mark or an X.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, the Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland (ARNN) only registered midwives who had some type of formal training, and this did not commence until 1954.

The oldest of the midwives identified by the informants was Sarah Ann Keel, nee Durdle, born May 26, 1878. She married Isaac Keel on June 13, 1898. She died on November 11, 1950 at the age of seventy-two. A second midwife was Patience Pardy, nee Skiffington, born October 31, 1878. She married James Pardy on December 2, 1900.

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<sup>116</sup> Telephone interview with Marguerite Linthorne, June 23, 1999.

<sup>117</sup> Telephone interview with Marguerite Linthorne, July 22, 1999.

She died on June 20, 1963 at the age of eighty-five. Next, Rebecca Abbott, nee Durdle, was born on December 26, 1880. She married Archibald Abbott on February 11, 1902. She died on December 11, 1957 at the age of seventy-seven. A fourth, Eliza Jane Abbott, nee Sharpe, was born on July 20, 1884. She married Philip Abbott on December 10, 1904. She died on September 1, 1958, age seventy-four. The youngest of the midwives was Catherine Abbott, Power, Hayward, nee Abbott, who was born on August 2, 1885. She married Joseph Abbott on November 11, 1905; Albert G. Power on November 20, 1937, and Charles Hayward on November 23, 1943. She died on November 10, 1963 at seventy-eight years of age.<sup>118</sup> She was known to the respondents as Aunt Kate.

It is logical to conclude that these women practiced in and around the radius where they lived, rather than servicing the entire community. Again, Marguerite Linthorne has noted that they had little or no means of transportation so they could only work within walking distance of their own homes. Sarah Ann Keel worked in the Bayley's Cove region; Patience Pardy serviced the Catalina Road and Canaille area; Rebecca Abbott practiced midwifery in the Mockbeggar area, and also accompanied Dr. Rutherford when he attended births; Eliza Abbott served the region encompassing Rolling Cove, Long Beach, and Mockbeggar; and Catherine Abbott, Power, Hayward also worked at Rolling Cove and the surrounding areas.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Telephone interview with Marguerite Linthorne, June 29, 1999; parish records held by the Bonavista Historical Society.

<sup>119</sup> Telephone interview with Marguerite Linthorne, June 23, 1999.

### Prenatal Care, Pregnancy, and Birthing Experiences

The first [R 1] of the twenty respondents to give birth had her first child in 1929, at which time she was eighteen years of age. She resided at Lance Cove and, since a midwife was not available there, her husband went to Bonavista by dog and slide to get the midwife. She said "all my children was born in da house, 'cause was no hospitals den...da midwife use da come down from Bonavista; 'twas only a mile from Lance Cove da Bonavista." Given that the closest available midwife and doctor were at Bonavista, then, this woman did not have any medical or lay care or advice during any of her six pregnancies and, apart from complications with the birth of her first child, she had all good, normal births for the other five children; and she continued to engage in strenuous physical work throughout her pregnancies. She said: "I use da go in da garden, make fish...and on da flake...I had five born and I had no trouble...no sickness in da morning 'er nothing, jus go on." As for the midwives, she simply said "Mrs. Power, she was good, dat was da last one I had." In the case of her first pregnancy, however, the respondent was unable to born the baby and the midwife sent for the doctor.<sup>120</sup> The respondent could not recall the name of the midwife, but stated that Dr. Forbes and another doctor, whose name she also could not remember, came to help with the birth.<sup>121</sup> Unfortunately, the

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<sup>120</sup> Refer to the term "*born*" in Story, Kirwin, and Widdowson, eds., Dictionary, pp. 57-58. In this context the term refers to the process of giving birth; that is, "to give birth to."

<sup>121</sup> Both Dr. Alexander Forbes and Dr. Arthur Rutherford were stationed at Bonavista in the 1920's and 1930's.

baby did not survive. The respondent described this, her first birthing experience, at the age of eighteen, as follows:

I tell ya what I use da do—and dis woman what use da make fish, she said “you’ll be sarry fur dat”—I use da swing off on da beams in da store loft, you know, and it drewed da baby up me stomach and I couldn’t barn it see. Dey had da put me sleep and take it from me. I had stitches up thru me. Dey had da cut da baby, da baby was big see...had da kill it...’twas awful poor times, dem times.

It is likely that this woman also had one or two miscarriages after this first pregnancy since there was a period of five to six years between this and the birth of her first surviving child in 1935.

This particular case is the most tragic and dramatic of all birthing experiences garnered during the course of this research. It is representative not only of the lack of reproductive and prenatal information and care available to Bonavista women at this time, and the lack of medical expertise, facilities, and equipment held by doctors, but also of the lack of knowledge of female biology and reproduction possessed by these women. First-time expectant mothers could not obtain information and advice from a doctor since most did not visit the doctor either at the outset of or throughout the pregnancy. This was exacerbated by the fact that most young women learned little about their sexuality and procreation from their parents, given that such topics were generally taboo in most Bonavista homes. One informant [R 9] said that young people generally did not ask questions about reproduction or sex because parents made it clear that such issues were

off limits, and they would put a hand up to their mouth while talking to other adults so that their children could not overhear them.

The next informant [R 19] gave birth to her first child in 1933 at the age of twenty-one. In total she had nine children, four of whom were two sets of twins. Due to her advanced age and memory problems she was unable to provide specifics about her various birthing experiences. She did indicate that some of her children were born with the surgical aid of a doctor—"one 'er two of 'em I had 'em took from me"—because she was unable to give birth by the natural process. She also indicated that her proper aunt, Kate Hayward, was the midwife who attended the birth of her first child, while her own mother, Eliza Abbott, attended her last two births. She said that she would "be in bed a week" after the birth, that the midwife came to check on her and the baby each day, and "Mom be down all da time" to help with the other children and tend to the household work.

A third interviewee [R 17] gave birth to her first child in 1934 at the age of twenty-seven, her second in 1935, and her last in 1945. To the best of her recollection, being ninety years old at the time of the interview, Patience Pardy was the midwife who attended all three of her births. She also stated "I don't know if dere was a doctor dere 'er not, I don't tink." She said that she did not visit a doctor during any of the pregnancies, that she did not have any sickness during either pregnancy, and that "dey was all born healthy." Moreover, the youngest of her children was present at the interview and

commented "...I got a queer navel, my navel is right in, and my sister use da always say 'Patience done a poor job with your navel'."

Another informant [R 6] had the first of her five children in 1941 at the age of twenty-two. The birth took place at home with midwife, Mrs. Keel, and Dr. Alec Forbes. This woman said that she did not have any prenatal medical care during the pregnancy, although she did talk to her mother about it and also shared the experience with a close friend who was pregnant at the same time. She did not have any significant sickness during the pregnancy "just normal stuff like throwin' up and heartburn," and it was a relatively easy birth with no problems. Her second child was also born at home, in 1943, by Mrs. Keel. She couldn't recall for certain but figured that she did go for a regular check-up during this pregnancy "but I was healthy so I didn't have da go too often." She said she had some morning sickness, but the birth was unproblematic, and so fast that they did not have time to summon the doctor. Her third child was born at home in 1951 by midwife, Mrs. Hayward. She did see the doctor a couple of times during this pregnancy. When asked why she still had a midwife instead of giving birth at the hospital, she explained that there was only one doctor at the hospital, there were no cars to expedite a trip to the hospital, and there were no telephones to provide quick and easy communication. Thus, it was easier to get a midwife to come to her house because two of them lived only two or three minutes walk away from her (on each side of her house, geographically). She concluded that "**da midwife was just as good as a doctor anyway.**" (Author's Emphasis). She said that she found midwife and hospital births

about the same; both were good and she had no problems: “da midwives were good, and in da hospital dey did everything dey could.”

That being said, her fourth baby was born at BCH in 1959 attended by Dr. Heath, along with a nurse. The respondent indicated that she did visit the doctor a couple of times throughout the pregnancy, and said that the birth was “like da toothache, my dear, no problem at all, short and sweet.” Likewise, her fifth child was also delivered by Dr. Heath at BCH in 1961. She said “usually nurses dere, doctor comes in and looks on afterward; when you got no problems anyway.” This child was born with heart problems which went undetected at birth and throughout early childhood. The family noticed that the child could not engage in aerobic activities such as running or skating even for an average length of time; this aroused concern and the heart problem was subsequently discovered. The informant noted that “dese years now dey’d find dat out on the ultrasound.” Her son had open heart surgery at age thirteen, after having to wait a year to have this done because the Janeway Children’s Hospital was still under construction at the time (circa 1974).<sup>122</sup>

A fifth informant [R 15] had her first baby in 1943 at the Grace Maternity Hospital in Halifax, Nova Scotia at the age of twenty-three. (She grew up in Bonavista

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<sup>122</sup> This information is inconsistent with that given by Ellen M. Dinn, “*Janeway, Charles A.*,” in *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* Vol. III (St. John’s, NF: Harry Cuff Publications, 1991), p. 99 which states that the Charles A. Janeway Child Health Centre was completed in 1966. However, it may be that facilities for a major surgery, including that of open-heart surgery of a child patient, were not available until some years later.

but moved away to work and, subsequently, married and started a family). She visited the doctor throughout her pregnancy and was attended by the same at the birth. By the time her second child was born in 1947, the family had moved to Bonavista. She visited Dr. Heath while pregnant but gave birth at home attended by midwife, Mrs. Abbott. Likewise, her next two children were born at home with Mrs. Abbott, and her fifth child in 1955 with another midwife, Mrs. Power. Her last two children were born at BCH in 1959 and 1960, respectively, and she also had a miscarriage between the birth of these two, to the best of her recollection. She summarized that they were generally all average and normal births with no major complications, and noted that she visited the doctor during most of the pregnancies except “dere was one I didn’t see da doctor atall.”

The next interviewee [R 9] had the first of her two children in 1944, at the age of twenty-two. She was attended by her aunt, Rebecca Abbott, and Dr. Alec Forbes, and delivered a twelve pound baby after about a day and a half of labor. She did not have any consultation during the pregnancy: no checkups with the doctor and no advice from family members, friends, or local midwives. This woman continued to work as usual while she was pregnant, “in da gardens and at da fish.” She concluded “**Nothin’ handed down to ya den; we worked like slaves.**” (Author’s Emphasis). She had her second child at BCH in 1951, delivered by Dr. Heath. Again, she commented that she never even had morning sickness, and said “too much work da do...tough; young people now not as tough, don’t work sa hard.” She also did not attend regularly scheduled doctor visits, and indicated that she simply informed the doctor of the pregnancy about a month before the

expected time of delivery. This child had “baby jaunders” when brought home from the hospital, but the respondent noted that this was nothing to worry about since the condition would disappear without any sort of medical intervention.

Another informant [R 8] also had her first child in 1944, at the age of nineteen. This first baby, as well as her next four, was born at home attended by midwife Patience Pardy. The respondent noted that Mrs. Pardy “lived over Canaille, jus about a mile away” from her own residence in the Mockbeggar area. She also stated that she preferred to have the midwife as opposed to the doctor: “yeah, I rather had da midwife. Most a da people das where dey had deir youngsters to, in da homes. Not very many went da hospitals dey days.” This informant’s sixth and final pregnancy in 1963 consisted of twins, born at the Grace Hospital in St. John’s nearly five months premature, who survived only a few hours following birth. She said that she experienced abnormal swelling and the doctor at BCH arranged for her to go to St. John’s. Her daughter, also present at the interview, said: “Dr. Heath was here den, and dey taught (thought) she had a tumor, dey knew she was pregnant but dey taught (sic) she had a tumor besides. But when she went da St. John’s dey found out ‘twas a twin and not a tumor.” Finally, the respondent commented that she did not visit a doctor during any of her first five pregnancies: “No, da only time I seen a doctor was when I had da twin.”

Again, this is another striking example of the somewhat rustic nature of modern medical care available to Bonavista women and their families even in the 1960’s. Moreover, this circumstance provides some insight into the reasons why some, especially

older, women continued to place their trust and reliance with the midwife; that is, many likely decided that the midwife knew just as much, or more, than the doctor with regard to pregnancy and birthing. Indeed, the midwife was a specialist, so to speak, whereas the doctor was more of a general practitioner.

The next respondent [R 5] also gave birth to her first child in 1944 at the age of seventeen. Although the baby was born at home, there were complications, and surgery was done. She had a good pregnancy with no sickness and the child was born in good health. She explained that there was only one doctor and one nurse employed at BCH, and that "at dat time da doctor was gone so I had get American doctor on da Base here, had da go on da base and get a doctor. And da nurse was at da hospital so da nurse came with da doctor. I had surgery. Da American doctor did it." This experience is a prime example of the often unrealized impact of an event such as WWII on the daily lives of Newfoundland women and their families. It is also a testament to the lack of medical care and assistance available to residents of outport communities, although one of the largest in all of Newfoundland, even by the mid-forties and the establishment of the cottage hospital system.

In her second pregnancy, as in her first, this respondent garnered prenatal advice from her mother. The second child was born at home, in 1947, by the midwife with no complications, and the patient's mother was also in attendance at the birth. When asked why she opted to have this baby at home after her first experience, she said "Da doctor who was here at dat time, he use da drink a lot." She offered this as another possible

reason why other women also continued to use the services of a midwife following the opening of the cottage hospital in 1940. That being said, the respondent's third child was born problem-free at BCH in 1952, with both a doctor and nurse attending. The child's health was good at birth but problems developed later, which the informant chose not to specify. She said "It wasn't shown at birth, er dey didn't...dey never carried out dat good of a study; dat was '52, it wasn't like 'tis now." Regarding care throughout the pregnancy she said "I only had one or two visits, it wasn't like...[now]." She had difficulty during her fourth pregnancy in 1964, a cesarean section was performed at BCH, and the child was stillborn.

A fourth informant [R 2] also had her first child in 1944, when she was twenty years of age. Whereas the other three women had their first birthing experience in their own home in the year 1944—in one case with a midwife alone, in another with a midwife and the local doctor, and in the other with a military doctor and the cottage hospital nurse—this fourth woman had her first baby at BCH.

Another interviewee [R 11] had her first baby in 1945 at the age of nineteen. The child was born at home with midwife, Mrs. Abbott, Dr. Alec Forbes, and the patient's mother in attendance. Like many expectant mothers in Bonavista at the time, this woman did not avail herself of prenatal medical care, and expressed regret for not having done so: "No, I didn't go to da doctor, see, das why I had such a hard time; I should have had a section." The birth was long and difficult (Sunday to Tuesday), and the nine and a half

pound baby was helped into the world by forceps. The respondent described her daughter's condition:

first she was all disfigured and her eye was all swollen up and her nose and her face; she was in a mess, and I thought, you know, dere was something wrong with her, but after awhile it went away. But she still got a bad eye and she got a wry neck; she had da have operation on it. She still only got five percent vision in one eye. (She) had a operation on her neck 'cause she had dat wry neck; da cord was tightened and she had da have it stretched. Dat happened at birth.<sup>123</sup>

This informant's second child was born in 1947, just twenty months after her first child, at BCH with Dr. Alec Forbes. She stressed that she pursued regular prenatal check-ups during this and her other two pregnancies "...every month; I was scared after da first one." She also described her doctor's reaction to her second pregnancy as follows: "Well, when I went in first like he was mad with me 'cause I was pregnant, you know, **but see dere was no birth control pills den.** (Author's Emphasis). He wasn't mad but he was really concerned about me and he said 'you know what a hard time you had before, I'm not gonna take no for an answer dis time, you're gonna come in da hospital,' and I said yes." Her third child was born at BCH in 1950 with Dr. Heath. This was an

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<sup>123</sup> Electronic Mail response from Dr. Shirley Solberg, Monday, November 16, 1998: "The condition of the neck you are referring to is wry neck, also called *torticollis*. It happens as a result of a birth injury when the sternomastoid muscle develops a contracture (shortening). What happens is that the sternomastoid muscle is torn at birth, and depending on the extent of the injury you see different levels of deformity. The infant's (and later child/adult) head appears to be leaning towards one side. Intensive physiotherapy is usually instituted early now to help correct the condition and some pretty good results. However, you see a number of older adults who did not have the benefit of this treatment. **Forceps poorly applied** have caused a number of birth injuries." (Author's Emphasis)

easier birth of a smaller weight baby in comparison to the previous two. The child was fine at birth but died at the age of three years and five months of meningitis. The respondent was told that there was nothing, medically, that could be done to prevent this tragedy.

This woman had a fourth child born at BCH in 1952 with a nurse but no doctor present. She described it as a fast and easy birth of a small weight baby. She also saw the doctor every month during this pregnancy. While discussing the births of her third and fourth children she noted:

when (my third child) was born I said to da nurse 'are ya gonna get da doctor 'cause I know he's soon gonna be born,' but she didn't go and well I think da baby was born when he came in. And (my fourth), well I went in Saturday morning and all day Saturday no pain, all day Sunday no pain, and about twelve a clock in da night I started gettin' pain and I got up and walked out in da delivery room...and only a hour and she was born. It was da easiest one of all. I don't think da doctor was dere; no he wasn't, 'twas only da nurse because, you know, 'twas too quick, almost, da call 'en.

A tenth respondent [R 7] had her first child in 1945, at which time she was twenty-seven years of age. Her first four children were born at home attended by her own mother, Sarah Ann Keel, a midwife who delivered a large number of babies in Bonavista, and died about 1950. The informant said:

My mother was a midwife, she borned all my children except two...she died.<sup>124</sup> My mother borned (my first child)...jus me mother and me, das all. Da doctor come down and brought da doctor's brief case....ah, he said, she won't be sick fur hours yet, he went on and left me, and Mom borned

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<sup>124</sup> Refer to the term "*born*" in Story, Kirwin, and Widdowson, eds., Dictionary, pp. 57-58. In this context the word means "to act as a midwife; to deliver."

(my first child). He come back after and he said 'I believe ya mother had her instead a you,' he said. Den every day he'd be dere den; (my husband) opened a bottle a rum, den he'd be dere every day fur a drink den while da rum was dere, you know. He knew, though, when you was gonda be sick, you know.

She also noted that she did not have any sickness during this first pregnancy other than heartburn, that it was a good, normal birth free of problems, and concluded "Me mother kept me like da queen, me maid."

Similarly, her next child was born in 1946 with "no doctor, just me mother das all." This was also the case for her third child, born in 1947: "Da doctor come dere, dere a little while das all, but mother borned her. She was some big baby, over 'leven pounds." Again, her fourth child was born in 1948 or '49 with "no one dere only mother, no doctor." As to whether or not her mother got paid (money or goods) for her services by non-relatives, the informant replied "No, nothin' like dat den." Shortly before her fifth child was born, in 1950, the respondent's mother (and midwife) suffered a stroke, so she experienced her first hospital birth without her mother at this time: "Dr. Heath come out and he said, 'you're goin' in da hospital,' so I was in da hospital a couple days before (the baby) was born."

After this, the informant endured a miscarriage when she was two months pregnant. She blamed it on the fact that she had previously had all of her teeth pulled by Dr. Heath. She was sick for months after the miscarriage and had little energy. Before the birth of her sixth child, then, the informant's mother and midwife died, and she availed herself of the services of another local midwife, Mrs. Abbott, rather than

returning to BCH for the delivery of her last two children in 1952 and 1953, respectively. Incidentally, the only one of her seven children born at BCH has medical problems with her legs and has had both knees operated on. The interviewee commented "the doctor up in Toronto...he said 'twas from birth but I don't understan' it, fur her da have dat all dose years from birth and never find her legs until dis last few years."

A third interviewee [R 16] also had her first child in 1945, when she was twenty-seven years old. She had her second child in 1949. While her first two were born at home with a midwife, her next four were born at BCH. She also suffered one miscarriage after the sixth and last child, at which time she was age forty-nine. This woman did not provide any further information about her birthing experiences due to memory difficulties.

The next informant [R 3] had two children, the first in 1946 when she was twenty years old and the second in 1964 when she was thirty-six years old. Both were born at BCH with a nurse and doctor in attendance. However, circumstances changed a great deal between the births of her two children. She described the situation leading up to the first birth as follows:

... jus ask the midwife if she would come, and ask the doctor if anything would occur; if I couldn't born it at home, if I had be taken da hospital, if he would come out. So he said he would come out and if anything would happen, he'd take me back (to the hospital) . He had da put me sleep and take (the baby) anyway. Da midwife be called in da morning or in da night because da doctor didn't come to houses, but it got rough (weather) and dey couldn't get me in da hospital so da nurse and doctor had stay here all day with me 'til da next day; 'til they got me in hospital. It was a bad day. Da horse took da nurse and da doctor, went ahead a me; went down across

da pond and went on up Church Street and over by da cold storage. I was behind, another man drivin' another horse, and dey had sides put up on the slide and had clothes put around me—I was like in a bed like, goin' in hospital—and da snow was up (deep) da horse had a job da get through it. Dere was no ploughs.

By contrast, the birth of her second child was much less dramatic, although she still did not visit the doctor on a regular basis during the pregnancy—“went in once ‘er twice and dat was all fur da year...not like dey do now, goin’ in every three ‘er four weeks gettin’ blood tests, nothin’ like dat. You just had ya name booked at da hospital and dat was it.” Also, this was a much easier birth than the first—“only few minutes was all over, couldn’t believe it. From time I left here ‘til doctor called out and told my husband, ‘twas a half’ hour!” As to whether or not there was a monetary expense incurred upon women who had their babies at BCH, this woman stated that: “you pay da hospital, it was only a small fee, I don’t know...it was five ‘er six dollars ‘er something a year. After da hospital got organized, you know, den more people started goin’ to da hospital.”<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Ruby Skinner Dewling, “*Utilization of Cottage Hospitals and Health Service Needs in Two Defined Districts*,” M.Sc. Thesis (St. John’s, NF: Department of Community Medicine and Behavioral Sciences, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1983), pp. 14-16 noted that data on cottage hospital fees is somewhat scanty. She indicated that the initial fee was \$2.50 per year. She did not give any evidence of fee increases during the first decade of the cottage hospital system. The annual fee per household was raised to ten dollars in 1943, and an additional, although unspecified, fee was charged for maternity cases. Also refer to the Annual Report of the Department of Health 1951 (St. John’s, NF: Government of Newfoundland, 1953), pp. 2-3 to see that this rate was in effect at the Bonavista Cottage Hospital. Likewise, see the Annual Report of the Department of Health 1952 (St. John’s, NF: Government of Newfoundland, 1954), p. 21 which states that the fee increased from ten to fifteen dollars per family per annum as of October 1, 1952, and that other charges, including that for maternity cases, would be “revised” in 1953. Again, dollar figures for these additional fees are not listed. Finally,

Another woman [R 20] experienced a total of fifteen pregnancies during the years 1946 to 1961. One of these ended in miscarriage (between the eighth and ninth), and the final pregnancy produced twins. The first five babies were delivered at home by the midwife, Mrs. Abbott, and the remaining ten were born at BCH with Dr. Heath. The informant stated that she went to very few doctor's check-ups during her earlier pregnancies: "you got me, maid, 'tis not much I went to a doctor fur, not dose days. No, I don't tink so. If I did go I only went once. I can't remember, until da last ones now, you know, like (the twins) I went several times with dem. And I went a couple a times with da others, but da first five I don't know if I ever went to a doctor 'er not, can't remember anyway." Despite the lack of prenatal care, all of her children were born fairly healthy: "dey were all pretty good, my dear, tank God. Some mighta had ailments after dey were born, jus da ordinary stuff. But dey all were born in very good health."

Moreover, she did not have any particularly negative birthing experiences:

no, I never had no trouble with none of 'em...it didn't cause me any problem jus das with da twin, I taught I was gonda die. I didn't have no problem, only when da last fella was born dey put me out because what dey calls da afterbirth jus stuck on...but apart from dat I never had no problem. It was less dan a hour between 'em anyway, less dan a half hour.

She further described her doctor's reaction to the birth of her twins:

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Leonard A. Miller, "The Newfoundland Department of Health," Canadian Journal of Public Health 50, 6 (June 1959), p. 235 stated that when the cottage hospital plan was replaced by the federal-provincial hospital insurance program in 1958, annual hospital fees per family were reduced to ten dollars. He did not indicate the pre-1958 rates.

when da twin was born he was dere all da time because one fella was born and he put his coat on, he was goin' home fur his supper. When he went through da door he had da turn and come back. He taught (thought) 'twas gonna be a long time in between. Doctors didn't even know, not 'til after dey were born. Dat was stupid den, I mean, you know. After dey were born he shook his head and he said I taught (sic) dere was something peculiar, he said, about dis case. He didn't know. You think he woulda felt two heartbeats and one ting and da other, wouldn't ya. I thought it was stupid anyway; I couldn't believe it when I heard 'en say dat, comin' from a doctor. I didn't know, my dear, I was havin' twins, no, I didn't know, not 'til one little guy came along, and he shook his head. And, gee whiz, I taught (sic) dat awful queer, fur a doctor, you know. I visit more when I was pregnant with dey two dan what I did with either one of 'em, a; I used da go in dere often. But he didn't know. I taught (sic) da was awful stupid, fur a doctor. Sure, now dey can tell, dose days, if 'tis a boy or a girl.

This woman's experience suggests that Bonavista women did not have speciality medical expertise and care at their disposal even by the early 1960's.

The above respondent also compared her first five births with the midwife to those at BCH. She said "well back den, I mean, you wouldn't allowed outta bed den, not like dey is in da hospital; couple a days dey let ya out. But back den, well my first son now, well I lived with his grandparents, and dey wouldn't 'low me outta bed fur eight days; wouldn't allowed da get up, 'nough da drive ya foolish. Long time ago dat was da old peoples belief see." She confirmed that new mothers were not even permitted out of bed to go to the outhouse. They had to rely on a chamber pot instead, which she declared was simply "terrible." As for the midwife, the respondent said that "she'd come each day fur a week. Yeah, we had da pay her a fee but what I don't know now cause 'tis too far back. I don't tink 'twas all dat much, not back in dese days, but you had da pay her

jus da same, but I don't know what." With regard to a hospital fee, she responded "no, I tink den you just had da pay ya doctor so much a year, I tink das da way it went."

The next informant [R 12] had her first child in 1947, at the age of nineteen. All three of her children were born at BCH but she did not visit a doctor throughout any of the pregnancies. Nevertheless, all of the births were normal and uncomplicated, and the babies were born healthy. Dr. Alec Forbes was present for the first birth, but the nurse was the main attendant. This was also the case for her second birth sixteen months later. This woman had her third and last child thirteen years later in 1961, attended by Dr. Heath. She still did not see a doctor while pregnant, and said: "I never had no trouble so I didn't go."

Another woman [R 4] also gave birth to her first child in 1947, attended at home by Dr. Alec Forbes. She further indicated:

I had my grandmother, she was a midwife; my father's mother (Sarah Ann Keel). So she stayed with the doctor but she didn't born (the baby). She was older den. She borned a lot a children. **Dat was our second doctor, grandmother.** With (my first pregnancy) I never did visit a hospital. I registered da go in but mom didn't want me da go in dere; mom was 'fraid for me da go in, so I didn't go. Da doctor used da come (to houses) den, but see after dat da doctor wouldn't come out, you had da go to da hospital. (Author's Emphasis)

In contrast, her second child was born at BCH in 1958 with a doctor and nurse attending. The informant also noted that she visited the doctor during this pregnancy: "I had da go to da hospital, every so many months, I don't know if 'twas every three months 'er what."

Another informant [R 18] gave birth to her first child in 1948 at the age of twenty-

four. She was attended by midwife Mrs. Abbott, and said “**she was like a doctor anyway.**” (Author’s Emphasis). Dr. Alec Forbes was also present at the birth because the patient was “...a bit late (overdue) so she (the midwife) called da doctor in.” When asked if there was any particular reason why she did not go to BCH for the birth the respondent replied “I dunno...jus I had my mind made up I wouldn’t goin’ in dere.” She indicated that she confided in her mother-in-law if she had any questions or worries about the pregnancy, but as for prenatal visits to a doctor she said “no, I don’t tink I did.” This woman also had two more children who were born at BCH with Dr. Heath, and she did visit the doctor “probably one ‘er two (times), probably twice I might’ve went in, da last month ‘er two” during these pregnancies.

Another woman [R 10] had her first child in 1948 at the age of nineteen. She had the baby at BCH with Dr. Alec Forbes attending. However, she had midwife Liza Abbott for her second child, and midwife Kate Hayward for her third. She explained that she reverted back to giving birth at home with a midwife for financial reasons. She noted, for example, that she paid nearly thirty dollars for one of the hospital births while she “only had da pay da midwife ten dollars and she use da look after me, keep me clean and da baby too. She’d take da baby clothes home, wash it and bring it back agin. She use da come in da morning and agin in da evening fur seven days.”

This informant had her fourth child at BCH with “jus da nurse dere. Dr. Heath was called out and da baby was born while he was gone.” She was attended by midwife

Mrs. Abbott again for the birth of her fifth child in 1953. Similarly, she planned to have her seventh baby at home but said that she “took bad and had da go da hospital.” Again, her ninth and tenth children were born at home with a midwife, while her last two were born at BCH. Obviously, then, this woman felt secure enough to give birth attended by a midwife rather than a doctor and continued to do so up until 1960, despite the fact that the services of the cottage hospital had been available for twenty years by this time.

The next interviewee [R 14] had all of her nine children at BCH, the first of whom was born in 1949 when she was eighteen years old. She also indicated that Dr. Heath was the doctor of record for the first three or four births, while Dr. Gregoriou (she did not specify if it was Dr. Christos Gregoriou or Dr. Penelopi Gregoriou) attended the others. She indicated that she did visit the doctor a “couple times” during her first pregnancy. Similarly, the twentieth respondent [R 13] who had her first child in 1950 at the age of twenty, also had her first and other two children at BCH attended by Dr. Heath.

One of the main conclusions to be drawn from the above maternity cases is that the oldest respondents—those women who gave birth to their first children before the cottage hospital was established—continued to respond to pregnancy and birth in the traditional way and maintained their allegiance with the midwife for many years after BCH provided them with a more modern alternative. On the other hand, the younger of the respondents can be said to have gradually developed a reliance on the medical doctor and the hospital ward, although this option did not always result in the provision of expert

medical care. Of course, the fact that medical doctors eventually ceased making house calls was a major causative factor in the above situation, as was the apparent non-replenishing of the group of midwives in the community. Once local midwives stopped practicing without any new midwives being trained, it obviously became increasingly difficult for women to employ a midwife to attend them even if they preferred a midwife to a doctor. As a result, the traditional practice of midwifery in Bonavista was drawing to a close by the 1960's, and the increasing trend toward institutionalized maternity care, which started in the 1940's, had now become a fact of the modernized lifestyle of the community.

In addition to the transitions in their prenatal and birthing experiences discussed above, Bonavista women also went through some changes in the ways and means by which they cared for their children on a daily basis from the 1930's to the 1960's. In particular, there were changes in the types of formula used for infant feeding, and in the kinds of solid food available for a child's introduction to meals. Another major change evidenced by the data is that women were putting much less reliance on home-made remedies in tending to the minor ailments of themselves and their children. In contrast, the one aspect of child care which remained unchanged throughout and by the end of this period of study was that of diapering.

### Infant Feeding and Baby Formulas

The two aspects of diet being examined here are the types of milk or formula used for infant feeding, and the kinds and methods of food preparation used when babies began to eat solid foods. First, analysis of the data on infant feeding shows that only a minority of the twenty women interviewed ever breast fed any of their babies. Rather, pre-packaged, store-bought, canned/tinned milk, namely Carnation brand, was used as a formula for infants and babies by the majority of these Bonavista mothers. In fact, one study on infant feeding found that even by 1978, only seventeen percent of Newfoundland mothers breast fed their newborns in hospital, and about one-third of these discontinued breast feeding during the first week after their release. The majority of these were the mothers in rural communities who most often switched to evaporated milk once they returned home from hospital.<sup>126</sup>

Another study conducted in 1984 noted various reasons given by mothers as to why they did not breast feed at all, or discontinued this method once they left the hospital. Some experienced pain and/or discomfort while breast feeding, while others became discouraged when their newborn was slow to begin feeding. Some indicated that the procedure was inconvenient and time-consuming especially if they returned to work within a short time. Perhaps most important, however, was the conclusion that women

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<sup>126</sup> This 1978 study was discussed in Kay Matthews, Suzan Banoub-Baddour, Maureen Laryea, Edna McKim, and Karen Webber, Infant Feeding Practices in Newfoundland and Labrador: A Study of the First Six Months of Life (St. John's, NF: School of Nursing, Memorial University of Newfoundland, February 1994), pp. 14, 16.

who were educated about the benefits of breast feeding in comparison to other methods would more often use it than women who had less knowledge of the differences.<sup>127</sup>

Lack of knowledge and/or misinformation regarding the benefits of breast feeding, along with demanding work roles at the household level were probably the two main reasons why Bonavista women primarily used other types of infant formulas. While discussing her engagement in subsistence agriculture, for instance, one interviewee [R 17] stated that Canon Bailey told his congregation that goats' milk was the best available milk for adults as well as children. However, one of the main sources of information on infant and baby care which became available to mothers in the 1940's and 1950's, indicated that goat milk formula required supplements of both vitamins C and D if it was to be used for infant feeding, whereas cows milk only required vitamin C supplementation, and evaporated milk did not require any additions, other than sugar and water, to make it a suitable infant formula. This publication, The Canadian Mother and Child, which probably did not become available to Newfoundland mothers until the 1950's, also promoted the value of breast milk as the best milk for infants. It explained that the antibodies present in the secretion of *colostrum* are transferred to the infant upon initial feeding, thereby improving immunity against and ability to ward off infections.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> This 1984 study was also discussed in Matthews, *et al.*, Infant Feeding, p. 15.

<sup>128</sup> The Canadian Mother and Child, Fourth Edition (Hull, PQ: Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 1979), pp. 141-146, 160-161. The first edition of this handbook was published in 1940, the second in 1953, and the third in 1967.

It is likely that many Bonavista mothers, and even the local doctors, were not aware of such advantages of breast feeding during these years.<sup>129</sup>

#### Tin Milk: Carnation and Borden's

At least twelve of the interviewees specifically stated that they used Carnation evaporated milk to feed their babies. Also, two of the older women, who had their first babies in 1941 [R 6] and 1943 [R 15] respectively, indicated that they had used a brand of canned milk called Borden's for infant feeding. The latter noted that she had used both Borden's and Carnation to feed her babies, while the former said that she breast fed her first child but "had no milk" to breast feed her second child, so she used Borden's as a baby formula. She also said that she did not attempt to breast feed any of her following three babies; she just continued to use the Borden's canned milk for feeding.

#### Breast Feeding

Apart from the above respondent, only four other women out of the twenty indicated that they had breast fed any of their babies. One of these informants [R 5] said that she breast fed her first two children (born in 1944 and 1947, respectively), but used canned Carnation milk for her third child (born in 1952). Similarly, another [R 20]

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<sup>129</sup> In fact, after emigrating from Britain and subsequently giving birth at St. Clare's Mercy Hospital at St. John's, Newfoundland in 1969, one woman was reprimanded by her doctor because she chose to breast feed her infant. In short, the doctor told her in no uncertain terms that she was poisoning her child. Obviously, this medical professional was unaware of or did not believe in the value of the thick yellow fluid which the newborn received during initial feeding.

woman also said that she breast fed her first two children (born 1946 and 1947, respectively) but turned to Carnation milk for her other thirteen babies. Another interviewee [R 4] breast fed the first (born 1947) of her two children but bottle fed the second (born 1958) using Carnation milk. A final informant [R 19] stated that she breast fed and that she also used cows milk (which she obtained from a local man who kept livestock) as an infant formula. None of these women provided any reasons for switching to Carnation milk with the exception of the first of these who indicated that by the time she had her third child in 1952 “you could go and get milk den, tin milk.”

#### Nestle's Sweet Milk

In total, then, only five of the twenty respondents ever breast fed any of their babies. A sixth informant [R 2] noted that she did try to breast feed but was unable to do so because she had “risin’ breasts.” Thus, she turned to Carnation milk for infant feeding, only after she “tried cows milk but it didn’t work.” This woman further indicated that she fed one of her babies on Nestle’s Sweet Milk because “dat was da only thing (the child) could keep down.” Similarly, another woman [R 14] said that she also fed her second child, born in 1950, with Nestle’s Sweet Milk because “da other kinds a milk didn’t satisfy ‘en; he’d be cryin’ all da time, but give ‘en dat, not a sound outta ‘en.” A third mother [R 9] also said that she fed her first baby, born in 1944, on Nestle’s Sweet Milk at a cost of twenty-seven cents per can, whereas her second child, born in 1951, was fed Carnation milk at eighteen cents per can. This provides another example of the impact which wartime conditions, in this instance WWII, had upon the daily lives of women and

children in outport Newfoundland. This mother fed her first child on Nestle's because there was a ration on sugar at the time due to the war. Nestle's sweet milk contained sugar whereas it was added to the Carnation milk to make it a suitable formula for babies.

SMA: Simulated Milk Additive

Apart from the one woman who used cows milk to feed some of her children, and the three who used Nestle's Sweet Milk, the other type of infant formula used by Bonavista mothers was one which they referred to as SMA, which is the acronym for Simulated Milk Additive (hereafter SMA). One informant [R 14] stated that she had used mainly Carnation milk for infant feeding, but that one of her nine children, born in 1961, was allergic to Carnation milk so she used SMA, a powdered milk specially formulated for infant feeding. Another respondent [R 12] also noted that she used SMA for her last child, born in 1961, but she did not indicate whether or not there was any particular reason why she used this formula instead of Carnation milk, which she had used for her other two children. Finally, the youngest of the twenty interviewees [R 13] most likely also fed her three children on SMA. She said "...dere was a powder dat I use da buy at da drugstore. Da druggist came here in '49...and dere was, I don't know, it was something similar to Similac and stuff den dat I use da mix up but it was powder. I can't remember da name of it...."

In general, then, this data traces a rough progression in types of infant formula from the use of animal milk to evaporated milk, and then to specialty formula. There is little evidence that mother's milk was widely used by Bonavista women during the

period. It seems, instead, that breast feeding was only used until canned, evaporated milk was available for purchase in local shops, or when mothers could not afford to purchase this alternative formula.

#### Introducing Babies to Solid Food

Bonavista women also saw changes in both the availability and preparation of the kinds of solid foods which they first fed to their babies. The main baby food which was available for purchase in Bonavista shops throughout most of the period was that known as pablum. Approximately fifty percent of the respondents specifically named pablum as the main food that they first fed to their babies. In addition, six of the informants described a combination of bread or biscuits which they "soaked" in milk and/or tea until softened and then fed to their babies. Aside from this, most women mashed vegetables and other foods (which they prepared for the other family members) so that their babies could eat them. Only a minority of these mothers ever fed any of their babies store-purchased, processed baby foods because these were not available to Bonavista mothers during the 1940's and 1950's.

#### Soaked Bread and Biscuits

One of the eldest respondents [R 19] said that when her babies were old enough for semi-solid food she would give them soaked biscuits or bread, sometimes with the crust removed but not always. Another [R 9] woman recalled feeding her babies what

she referred to as “pap: you’d pinch up bread with milk and sugar.” The daughter of one informant [R 8] said: “we used da have lemon cream biscuits soaked in milk.” Another also noted [R 3] that the first food given to babies was bread or biscuits “soaked in tea.” That is, the food was placed in a saucer and then softened by pouring tea over it. A fifth interviewee [R 10] indicated that she fed eleven of her twelve children lemon cream biscuits or homemade bread soaked in “milky” tea. A final informant [R 18] confirmed these combinations in saying “(my mother-in-law) use da get bread and biscuits, like lemon cream biscuits, soak it in tea ‘er in milk. We still does dat now.”

#### Pablum

The latter respondent [R 18] also noted that “pablum den is da ting you’d buy” for infant feeding. Another [R 9] fed her babies with “pap” as she described above, as well as with pablum. Likewise, the youngest of the twenty interviewees [R 13] indicated that she could not buy ready-made baby food: “no, we used da get pablum in a box, and I used da mash fruit and stuff...” Two other women further discussed the lack of availability of foods for babies when their children were small. One of these [R 11] said “I used da feed ‘em pablum when dey were babies. (My first child) was born (1945) when da war was on and you couldn’t get hardly anything.” Similarly, a second informant [R 3] said “you couldn’t hardly get anything for (my first child, born 1946), dere was only something called pablum den; dats all you could get den, you couldn’t get baby food ‘er nothing den, so he had da eat like we eat.” She also noted that as soon as children were old enough they were fed mashed vegetables since dinner was “cooked”

virtually everyday. Another interviewee [R 5] explained that “dere was da pablum, and you gradually go on from pablum, den you have cereal, and den you increase in da food line, like mashed potato, carrot and stuff like dat.” A seventh [R 20] woman commented “Oh, you could get cereal den: rolled oats dey use da call it; porridge dey called it, cream wheat, and puffed wheat, I tink das what ‘twas called, use be in great big bags...(and) like potato and one ting anodder dat dey wouldn’t able dat eat deirselves I use da mash it up, of course, stuff like dat.” Likewise, another respondent [R 12] fed her babies pablum and mashed vegetables, while indicating “I never give dem any baby food but you could get it when (my last child) was born (in 1961), I think.” A ninth informant [R 15] fed the first of her seven children (born 1943) pablum whereas for the last couple of children (born 1959 and 1960) “dere was all kinds a baby food you could buy.”

#### Tin Baby Food

Only three of the twenty interviewees stated that they purchased pre-processed baby food for the purpose of starting a child on solid foods. One of the women [R 4] explained the difference in feeding between her oldest and youngest children: “with (the oldest, born 1947) dere was big buckets a pablum, you put milk in dat and feed ‘em with dat. But with (the youngest, born 1958) dere was baby food, not bottles, tins. I used da buy a case a fruit...and a case a vegetables, and dere was twelve in a case, in cans den not in bottles, ‘tis in bottles now.” A second interviewee [R 10] also said that she fed all but the youngest of her twelve babies lemon cream biscuits or homemade bread soaked in “milky” tea—“Da only one dat got baby food was (the youngest, born 1963).” This

consisted of bottles of custard, peaches, and such. This woman also noted that apples and oranges were included in children's diet when possible: "every year we use da get a box a apples fur da youngsters." Another [R 15] also noted that by the time the last two of her seven children were born, in 1959 and 1960, respectively, "dere was all kinds a baby food you could buy."

### Home Remedies

A discussion of the use of home remedies with each of the twenty respondents revealed further indications of the changes experienced by Bonavista women and their families in the area of medical care. The fact that (a) most of the women talked about remedies that their mothers and grandmothers had used but explicitly stated that they had never used such remedies themselves, (b) the lack of knowledge of how certain remedies were made and/or used, and (c) the predominant references to store-bought products, all serve as evidence that non-traditional methods of treating ailments were chosen over home remedies by Bonavista women during this period.

The remedies mentioned by the interviewees can be loosely grouped into four categories. The main ailment which was addressed by virtually all of the women was that related to colds, flu, coughs, and sore throat. This was also the main ailment for which they used a home-made remedy, as opposed to a store-purchased product, for treatment. A second ailment discussed by respondents, treated with both home-made and store-bought remedies, was that involving minor skin abrasions such as cuts, sores, scrapes,

and boils. The third group of complaints, treated mostly with store-purchased products, involved stomach pains and constipation. The last set of health-related remedies included store-bought products which served as a general tonic or vitamin supplement. Most of the remedies presented here are addressed, often in more detail, in John K. Crellin's book on the practice of home medicine in Newfoundland, from which some references are provided throughout the following section.

#### Colds, Flu, Coughs, and Sore Throat

The main home-produced remedy which was described by nearly one-half of the informants was that used to alleviate the symptoms of the common cold and cough. For this purpose, variations of a mixture of molasses, pepper, and kerosene oil were heated or boiled and subsequently rubbed on the chest and/or throat and, sometimes, ingested. One of the eldest informants [R 17] said that when her two oldest children were suffering from colds and coughs, she "greased" their chest with a mixture of kerosene oil and pepper, and then placed a hot cloth onto the area. In contrast, she bought cough syrup for her youngest child; and instead of using the above mixture she also bought Vicks (Vaporub) which she rubbed onto the child's chest and throat, wrapping the area with flannel cloth to keep the heat concentrated there. Similarly, another woman [R 6] used a combination of kerosene oil and butter to rub the chest of her older children when they had colds and coughs, whereas she used Vicks and Baby Aspirins for her youngest child. A third informant [R 5] said "da old people use da use like molasses boiled with kerosene oil and pepper, and stuff like dat, but I didn't use dat kind a stuff...you could get cough syrup den

in da stores.” Likewise, a fourth woman [R 4] said “...Pop use da rub me throat with kerosene oil and butter, and get a wool sock and put aroun’ our neck; but after dat dere was Vicks, Vicks come out after dat see.”<sup>130</sup> The youngest of the twenty interviewees stated “well, fur coughs you’d boil up molasses. Mom even took kerosene oil and molasses; Mom used da get da lamp and put a few drops a kerosene oil in a spunful a molasses fur a cough.”

Another version of this remedy was explained by two other respondents. The daughter of one of these women [R 8] talked about what her mother would do “like if you had colds ‘er sore throat and dat, use da boil molasses and pepper and butter, and boil it up and den it’d be almost like a taffy; use da thicken up and get hard like.” A second informant [R 18] also described this practice of making her own cough syrup or cough drops, as it were, saying that she would “boil molasses on da stove, and butter; we put little bit a butter, little bit a pepper, and molasses, and give ya dat da drink. And we use da roll it into candy.”<sup>131</sup>

One woman [R 9] also described a use for Vicks which differs from that previously outlined. She said that when her children had a “stuffed up nose” she would

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<sup>130</sup> Crellin, *Home Medicine*, p. 236 notes that Vicks Vaporub was first available in 1890, and pp. 128-129 state that this product soon took precedence over home-made remedies for croup, coughs, colds, and flu.

<sup>131</sup> Crellin, *Home Medicine*, p. 118 also refers to these ingredients and methods of making cough syrup and/or cough drops. Pp. 169 and 186 also note the combination of molasses with kerosene and/or other items as a remedy for influenza and sore throat.

rub the Vicks under their nose and around their nostrils so that they would breathe in the vapors. This provided at least temporary relief of their sinus congestion. Finally, another informant [R 11] described the traditional remedy, as follows:

well you rub deir chest with Vicks, or goose grease and camphorated oil: we have a goose, you know, say you have a goose fur Christmas, and dere's a lot a fat comes off a dat. You had da drain off all da fat and bottle it. And in da winter, like when children get, you know, deir chest congested, you'd put it in a old saucer put on da stove with camphorated oil, and rub deir chest and deir back and den you put a piece a flanlette (flannel cloth)...it use da break up da cough.<sup>132</sup>

Apart from the cough, cold, and flu remedies outlined above, some respondents also listed the various names of the cough syrups that they purchased in local shops. One woman [R 15] named Friar's Balsam as a cough syrup that she used, another [R 8] mentioned Gerald S. Doyle cough syrup, while two others [R 18 & R 13] listed Buckley's Mixture.<sup>133</sup>

#### Skin Abrasions: Cuts, Sores, Scrapes, and Boils

A second group of ailments, for which respondents listed both home-made and store-bought remedies, can be generally referred to as skin abrasions, namely cuts and boils. The main home-made treatment for such wounds was what the women called a poultice. One of the eldest informants [R 17] explained that for cuts, open wounds,

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<sup>132</sup> Crellin, *Home Medicine*, pp. 159-160 also explain the preservation and application of goose grease; p. 117 notes that it was the most popular rub for coughs and colds; and pp. 105-106, 128 note the use of camphorated oil.

<sup>133</sup> These products are also noted in Crellin, *Home Medicine*, pp. 77, 79, 102, 155, 241; and the influence of Doyle's products in self-treatment is discussed on pp. 18-22.

infections, or risings she would make a bread poultice. This was done by soaking broken chunks of bread with hot water, placing it on a piece of cloth, spreading olive oil over the hot bread, then applying it to the afflicted area and tying it into place with a bit of string. Likewise, the daughter of one of the interviewees [R 8] confirmed that "...if you cut yasef 'er if you fell down 'er anything and figured you might have rocks and stuff in ya cut, use da make up a poultice and put on dat." This method was meant to extract the dirt from the wound and prevent the onset of infection.<sup>134</sup>

A third woman [R 9] described a couple of similar remedies that her mother used but she did not. Her mother made what she called linseed meal poultices to treat pneumonia.<sup>135</sup> The informant also described a type of salve that her mother made for the treatment of blisters: she put sunlight soap in hot water and added flour to make a paste (along with one other ingredient that the informant could not remember), then she scalded dandelions and rubbed into the mixture. This was spread onto a finger blister; likely used on fishermen who often had blisters on their hands. The interviewee concluded by saying "dey (older generation like her mother) was jus like doctors." Likewise, another informant provided a similar description of this salve, as made by her mother-in-law: "people use da be fishin' use da have boils on deir arms, right, she use da go out in da

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<sup>134</sup> Crellin, *Home Medicine*, pp. 63, 202 notes that this soft bread poultice was one of, if not the most popular type of poultice used for this purpose.

<sup>135</sup> This remedy is also addressed in Crellin, *Home Medicine*. P. 119 states that "Linseed was an especially popular item for poultices..." and pp. 199-200, 202 indicate that doctors recommended the use of this remedy.

yard and she'd get a dandelion, and she'd mix up soap and flour and she put it on da dandelion and wrap it around da arm."<sup>136</sup>

The main ready-made treatments used for the above types of ailment, as mentioned by two respondents [R 15 & R 9] were iodine, mercurochrome, and peroxide.<sup>137</sup> These were generally limited to bruises, scrapes, and cuts. Three of the women [R 3, R 9, & R 14] also mentioned the use of Minard's Liniment which was rubbed onto the afflicted area for aches, pains, and muscle strain.<sup>138</sup>

#### Stomach Pain and Constipation

The next ailment for which Bonavista women employed various ready-made, store-bought products for both themselves and their children was that related to stomach pain and constipation. One informant [R 9] explained that people used a product called painkiller, a liquid formulation. She said "you'd mix a certain amount with water and drink it if you had pains in ya stomach."<sup>139</sup> She also noted that people used a product called Radways for stomach pains: "you'd mix dat with hot water and sugar and drink

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<sup>136</sup> Crellin, Home Medicine, pp. 63, 202 describes variations of this method and also refers to it as a plaster.

<sup>137</sup> Crellin, Home Medicine, pp. 129-130, 158 note the use of iodine as an antiseptic and germ-killing agent, p. 120 mentions peroxide but states that it has only "a mild antiseptic action," while there was no entry referencing the use of mercurochrome.

<sup>138</sup> Crellin, Home Medicine, pp. 81, 205.

<sup>139</sup> Crellin, Home Medicine, p. 69 indicates that Perry Davis' Pain-Killer was one such product which, prior to 1930, contained narcotic substances.

it.”<sup>140</sup> The daughter of one informant [R 8] indicated that another shop product that people used for stomach aches was essence of peppermint. She said that they would “mix peppermint fur a bad stomach; use da buy it in little bottles, peppermint.”<sup>141</sup>

Three other respondents [R 6, R 10 & R 15] indicated that castor oil and/or castoria were products used to alleviate constipation. One of these [R 10] made the distinction that castor oil was used for “bowels; constipation” for older children and adults, whereas castoria was used for “bowels” for babies.<sup>142</sup> Another interviewee [R 4] further explained the dual use of castor oil and, later, milk of magnesia as methods of alleviating constipation and reducing fever:

In da old days we used castor oil, cod liver oil, and we always use da give 'em what dey use da call a physicke, a medicine, like when you be constipated, dey give ya castor oil, if you have a fever you take castor oil, but den after dat 'twas milk a magnesia. I remembers (my husband) was goin' in da bay one year, (our youngest child) wasn't born den, and (our oldest) took sick up dere, he had a temperature, oh he was burnin' up. (My husband) had da stay outta da woods, das how bad he was, and I didn't know what I was gonna do; no doctor up dere see. Anyway (my husband's) sister-in-law was up dere too and she had milk a magnesia over to her camp and we got it and give it to (our son). I'm sure das what sove (my son's) life dat time, milk a magnesia.

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<sup>140</sup> Crellin, Home Medicine, pp. 60, 223 confirm that this product was used as a remedy for stomach pain.

<sup>141</sup> Crellin, Home Medicine, pp. 165, 222 record this as an aromatic stomach settler.

<sup>142</sup> Crellin, Home Medicine, pp. 69, 123 confirm this distinction.

### General Tonics and Vitamin Supplements

Another health-related concern which Bonavista women dealt with themselves, as opposed to seeking the aid of the local medical doctor, involved the use of store-purchased products which served as general tonics and vitamin supplements. The products in this category listed by the respondents were cod liver oil, Scott's Emulsion, Bricks Tasteless, Beef Iron Wine, and Guinness' Stout. The daughter of one of the interviewees [R 8], described the use of the first three of these products in this way:

well, dey fed me on Scott's Emulsion. Now how you spells dat 'er what it is I don't know. It was like a vitamin, it was a supplement, dat was fur children, I s'pose. And den you use da get Bricks Tasteless, dat was more or less fur da adults. And like when we went da school we use da get it in school, we use da get cod liver oil; dey used da give us a bottle of cod liver oil da bring home, dat was back like first when we were goin' da school. I s'pose where food was so scarce and dat dey'd give ya dat so you'd get ya vitamins and dat right.

This information was confirmed by three other respondents who talked about these products. One [R 9] said that Scott's Emulsion was a vitamin supplement given to children, and described it as a liquid which was white in color. She further noted that the bottle portrayed a picture of a man with a fish on his back. One can surmise that this was meant to promote the product as one which would enable children to grow into strong and healthy adults.<sup>143</sup> Another informant [R 20] said "...cod liver oil das da main ting. When dey was goin' da school some of 'em use da get it free in school. Dey use da take a lot a

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<sup>143</sup> Crellin, Home Medicine, pp. 116, 233 mentions this product as a healthy, nutritional, and strengthening dietary supplement. Also, p. 149 includes it in a variety of products promoted for "women's complaints" such as "nerves."

dat when dey were growin' up. Das da most ting I used when dey were young...use da have dat all da time, in da winter 'specially."<sup>144</sup> Again, this comment highlights the fact that fresh fruits were almost non-existent in Bonavista shops during the winter, and vegetables that were stored in root cellars had probably deteriorated in nutritional value as the winter progressed.

Another three of the informants [R 5, R 7 & R 18] mentioned the use of a product called Bricks Tasteless as a general tonic. One of these [R 7] also referred to this product as a kind of remedy for mental and/or psychological malady: "I use da take Bricks Tasteless after we had da fire out dere. Me nerves got bad; I took Bricks Tasteless, but you can't get it now."<sup>145</sup> When I was on change a life I use da take Guinness' Stout. I don't know if you can get it now 'er not." She also indicated that she obtained the latter product from the local doctor to help her energy level, and so forth, much like vitamins or tonics were meant to do.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Peter A. N. Gard, "Health," sub-heading "Nutrition," in Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador, Vol. II (St. John's, NF: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Limited, First edition 1984), pp. 883-884 indicates that cod liver oil was given to Newfoundland school children from 1946 to 1957. Crellin, Home Medicine, p. 116 notes that the oil contains vitamins A and D.

<sup>145</sup> Crellin, Home Medicine, pp. 99, 116 list this as a vitamin supplement, tonic and strengthener, but it is not noted in the entry on remedies for nerves and stress.

<sup>146</sup> Crellin, Home Medicine, p. 24 refers to a drink called Guinness as one with restorative properties, but there is no such reference to Stout.

The above presentation of the application of home remedies in Bonavista households, combined with the birthing data outlined in the first part of this chapter, clearly demonstrates that there was a definite shift from a traditional reliance on community medicine to the system of modern, institutionalized health care which was developing in Bonavista (and other parts of Newfoundland) from the 1930's to the 1960's. In the case of home remedies, the data shows that most of the remedies used by Bonavista women and their families consisted largely of ready-made products which were purchased in local shops. Many of these were treatments for the relief of minor ailments—rather than cures—and are either quite similar to or the same as such products available for purchase in present day pharmacies, convenience and department stores. Moreover, many of the truly home-made remedies described by the respondents were ones used by their parents and/or grandparents but not by the respondents themselves. In fact, some interviewees [eg. R 15] stated outright that if they or their children were sick they simply went to the doctor as is the practice today.

#### Respondent Health Care Commentary

The discussion of home remedies and the state of health care in Bonavista, dating from the 1930's to the 1960's elicited considerable comment on the availability, or lack thereof, of modern health care facilities to Bonavista residents in the latter years of the twentieth century. The greater part of this discussion consisted of a comparative look back into the past and forward to the future, and highlighted something of a consensus

that health care facilities and services in Bonavista have deteriorated to the extent that the situation is, in many aspects, more unsatisfactory than it was during the days when the population relied almost exclusively on one or two doctors for virtually all of their medical and health-related problems. Most of the comments focused on the lack of service for commonplace health care needs such as removal of appendix and birthing of babies. Bonavista residents cannot avail of such services at the local hospital and have to travel at least as far as Clarendville (approximately one-hundred and fifteen kilometers from Bonavista by road according to present-day Newfoundland road map) to obtain them. Thus, residents argue that the hospital now serves little purpose and is, at best, operating as a day clinic. As one interviewee [R 4] said “our hospital, dere’s only older people in dere now, `tis not da same thing anymore...someone is sent home from St. John’s and dey’re no longer able da do something for `em, so dey’re put in here until...” [she didn’t finish the sentence—until they die].

Although the majority of the comments regarding health care pinpointed examples of negative changes, namely paucities in the level of available medical services, three respondents [R 12, R 14 & R 18] indicated that they felt that there had been little or no change in health care during their lives. Two others thought that conditions had changed for the better. One informant [R 5] looked back to the 1930’s and traced some improvements in the delivery of health care for Bonavista residents:

when da hospital came in first dere was no X-rays, da boat use da come in—you’d get a X-ray—da Christmas Seal...once a year, I think it was...I think so `cause she use da go around den see, around da coast, da

Christmas Seal.<sup>147</sup> If you had da get tonsils out 'er something like dat you had da go St. John's get tonsils out...(my daughter) had her appendix out but dat was done in here, dat was after Dr. Heath came here. It gradually improved with him, but first you had da go da St. John's. But it wasn't like it is now, it's a hundred percent better, medical wise.

Another respondent [R 15] also agreed that "It improved over da years because we got our MCP card,<sup>148</sup> and we got da hospital here."

Six other interviewees compared the lack of services in the 1990's to the availability of such services in the 1950's. One of these women [R 3] pointed out that there was basically only one doctor and three or four nurses during this time, yet "whatever was done he did it all: pulled teeth, appendix—das where I had me appendix out, I had all me teeth out in dere." Another [R 9] said:

I don't know about health care. We got a hospital but no surgeon. Even fur appendix you got da be rushed da Clarendville and could die on da way, so das worse dan years ago. Dr. Heath could cut; dat was forty-six years ago (1951). It was better den dan it is now. We needs a surgeon here in cases of emergency.

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<sup>147</sup> The *M. V. Christmas Seal* sailed the coast of Newfoundland from 1945 to 1970 "...providing X-rays and vaccinations to prevent tuberculosis." See Genevieve Lehr, "*Christmas Seal, M. V.*," in *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* Vol. I (St. John's, NF: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Limited, First Edition 1981), p. 434.

<sup>148</sup> See Janet E. Miller Pitt and Melvin Baker, "*Health*," and Diane P. Janes, "*Hospitals*," in *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* Vol. II (St. John's, NF: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Limited, First Edition 1984), pp. 874 and 1051, respectively. In fact, a Medical Care Plan was instituted by the Commission of Government in 1935, and it was continued by the Newfoundland Government following Confederation. However, Newfoundland did not opt into the Medical Care Plan of the Canadian Government until 1968. Whereas the previous plan required user fees, the new federal plan did not.

This was echoed by a third respondent [R 11] who said “years ago when Dr. Heath and dey were here, you didn’t have da go away fur appendix...tonsils...a baby, now you got da go away. You either got da go Clarenville ‘er St. John’s da have a baby, ‘er whatever you got da have done, you can’t get it done in here.” A fourth woman [R 4] echoed “dere was nothing too much trouble for Dr. Heath da do...he use da pull teeth and everything, born babies...you don’t even get a baby born in here now, dey all goes da Clarenville. And some people won’t go up dere, dey wants da go da St. John’s.” A fifth [R 7] summarized the situation most succinctly: “I remembers somebody havin’ a baby dere not long ago and dey took ‘em right on da Clarenville when dey shoulda borned it in da hospital; dey took her from da hospital, **sure whata we got a hospital for?**” (Author’s Emphasis).

The youngest of all twenty informants [R 13] had this to say:

‘tis bad now because we can’t even keep a doctor here, dey’re here for a few days ‘er a week and gone, and ‘tis hard da get appointments. When we had da one old doctor he was on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and he seemed da manage, and he went all up around da coves.... (At BCH) just him (Dr. Heath) and not very many nurses, probably two ‘er three, you know, RN’s. The rest a dem dey weren’t even trained nursing assistants, dey were just people dey brought in and trained. Aides dey use da call ‘em den. Dey had no training only what dey got from da nurses. But now da health system here is something else. I guess dey’re doin’ da best dat dey can but apparently dey only got one permanent doctor now and da others are transients; dey’re here for a few days, a week....

Finally, the lack of services at Bonavista, for one informant and her husband [R 10], constituted the main reason for their relocation from their home community to a personal

care home just outside the city of St. John's. This woman required kidney dialysis three times per week which she could not obtain at Bonavista.

Taking into consideration the reverberating theme in the interviewees' remarks on the changes in the provision of health care at Bonavista, one can conclude that it likely followed the pattern of a typical bell curve if plotted on a grid. That is, health care gradually improved from the early to mid-1800's when the community was serviced first by one and then two permanent, full-time physicians, to the 1940's when more institutionalized service was made available by way of the cottage hospital. According to the above statements, though, these informants believe that today's modern health care system has since deteriorated considerably.

**Chapter 6 - "We Had Twelve Children and Dey Never Lived On No Welfare":  
The Impact of the Economic Transitions of Confederation in Bonavista**

The previous chapters have described in much detail how Bonavista women and their spouses engaged in formal and informal, paid and non-paid types of work so as to secure a livelihood for themselves and their children from the 1930's to the 1960's. As such, it has been shown that paid employment and subsistence labour, combined with various budget-boosting work activities (which the majority of respondents became familiar with as children) created a strong work ethic and a sense of pride and self-reliance that sustained such coastal families despite the various hardships which they had to deal with on a daily basis. It has also been demonstrated that Bonavista residents experienced a transition from a traditional to a more modern lifestyle during the years 1930 to 1960. In particular, the women of Bonavista underwent a significant shift in the types of paid employment which were available to them due to the opening of Bonavista Cold Storage Incorporated in 1939. The 1940's signaled the beginning of a change from community medicine and midwifery births to the institutionalized system of health care provided by the cottage hospital. In the early 1950's, the introduction of the washing machine and various cleaning agents, for example, resulted in a radical change in the amount of time and physical labour which women expended in the completion of their household domestic tasks, and marked the debut of modern, technological household labour-saving devices in the homes of women in outport Newfoundland.

Although there is clear evidence that Bonavista women worked in various capacities to secure their own livelihood, and that Bonavista had already entered a period of modernization and industrialization prior to Confederation, there is no disputing the fact that Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada in 1949 had a significant degree of impact on the lives of women in the new province. The political and economic literature of Newfoundland which addresses this (combined with rhetoric and public perception upholding the benefits of social welfare), largely postulates that the baby bonus was a saving grace for women, so to speak, and that it greatly improved their economic circumstances. As outlined in chapter two of this work, Reid found that this literature was very limited and grossly underdeveloped, and thereby challenged its assertion regarding the baby bonus and household economy. The data presented in this chapter supply practical support to Reid's contention, given that Bonavista informants, who were some of the original recipients of the baby bonus, chiefly state that although this money added to their household income and enabled them to better provide for their children, the amount of money which they received was too little to make or break their economic lives.

This chapter will also lend insight into the impact of the provision of Unemployment Insurance (hereafter UI) upon the standard of living of Bonavista women and their families. Again, Reid has theorized that this provision had a potentially greater impact than the baby bonus because its economic value was much higher, providing a larger amount of cash-in-hand to the recipient. However, once the regulations of the

initial system of UI in Newfoundland are considered, and the data given by Bonavista women analyzed, it becomes clear that UI provided little, if any, direct benefit to women during the initial years of its inception. Instead, women were indirectly affected by way of their husbands' receipt of UI and, in the case of inshore fishermen, even this indirect benefit did not accrue to their wives until 1958 nearly ten years after Confederation was achieved. In fact, women who harvested fish along with their husbands did not become eligible to contribute and receive benefits in their own names until 1980.<sup>149</sup>

The final economic initiative of Confederation examined here is that of Old Age Pension. This benefit indirectly affected the financial circumstances of Bonavista women and their families in that many of these women lived with either their own parents or their in-laws during their first years of marriage or, in some cases, for all of their married lives until these elderly family members passed away. Again, the benefit amount was too low to make any significant improvement to the economic circumstances of a family.

In short, the analysis of Confederation and its social welfare provisions indicates that Bonavista residents did experience political and economic shifts because of it, but the data also show that Bonavista women did not derive the level of monetary stability from these provisions which has often been suggested and accepted as true.

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<sup>149</sup> Wright, "*Images of Gender*," in *Lives and Times*, pp. 130, 143.

### Unemployment Insurance

In the Bonavista case, only five of the twenty respondents received UI at any time during their working lives, while the husbands of thirteen respondents received UI. Four of these thirteen men were self-employed, inshore fishermen and, therefore, did not qualify for UI benefits until 1958. This section will examine the circumstances of informant receipt of UI first, and then look at the respondent spouses who were fishers, and end with those who were not fishers.

To begin with, none of the fourteen women who worked prior to marriage received UI, since most did so preceding Confederation, before UI was available to any Newfoundland residents. Of the five respondents who did receive UI, four obtained the benefit during marriage, while one did so after marriage. However, none of these five women received UI for any significant periods of time, and only one received it while raising her children; the remaining four got UI near the end of their paid employment years when their children had left the family home. Thus, it was not a source of income which Bonavista women depended upon for the economic maintenance of their families.

### Respondent Receipt of UI

The first of the five informants [R 4] to receive UI could not specify the particular year which she received the benefit, but her recollection provided enough information to indicate that it was very likely sometime during the 1950's. She said, "when I worked (with my brother) I got unemployment...not very long...what was it I use da get...I believe

'twas six dollars every two weeks...I don't know now, I forgets, 'twas not very much, I taught (sic) 'twas twelve dollars a month." This woman began working at her brother's business after she got married in 1946, and earned thirty-five dollars per month.

Moreover, since her first child was born in 1947 and her second not until 1958, one can approximate that she only had one child at the time that she received UI benefits.<sup>150</sup> The remaining four UI recipients did not collect any UI until after their children were grown.

The next interviewee [R 11] received UI after leaving Bonavista and subsequently divorcing from her husband. After twenty years of self-employment at the household level, she moved to St. John's and worked in a department store there for about eight years. She received UI for less than one year; about six years after she first entered the formal workplace in 1972:

yeah, I got unemployment, when was dat, 1978. I had a gall bladder attack and I had da go in hospital. I only had one attack and I went in and dey operated on me right away, and all da poison went thru my system; I almost died. And den I had da have another/second operation...so I was in hospital from November to February. So den, I decided, I said to da doctor I think I'll take da summer off, you know, because I wasn't in no shape da go back da work. So I was off ten months...all da winter I was jus recuperating, I wasn't even healin' up until da last a April. Da only bit a unemployment I got den was—I didn't get it fur a year—I got it fur eight months das all, and I phoned up and dey said I wasn't eligible. Das da only time I got unemployment.

This explanation reflects the UI regulation stipulating that benefits not be paid to persons unable to work due to illness because they do not meet the "available and capable"

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<sup>150</sup> Refer to Appendix H: Increase in Unemployment Insurance Rates, 1950 to 1960 for 1950 benefit rates for recipients with and without dependants.

requirement of the legislation. It should also be noted that this woman did not accrue any benefit from UI until nearly three decades after it became available to Newfoundlanders.

The next respondent [R 18] received UI for the first time in the early 1980's, and collected benefits "for a couple a years." She said, "I remember da first unemployment cheque I got, sixty-eight dollars; sixty-eight dollars a week. Dat was in '82, '83." She further stated, very simply, "oh yeah, it helped den because I wasn't workin' so 'twas a help." Again, one might note that the last of this woman's three children was born in 1957, so she did not have any dependent children by the early 1980's.

The last two of the five respondents who received UI did so close to the end of their paid employment years. The first of these [R 5] received UI for one year in the early 1990's, after twenty years of paid employment, before becoming eligible for Old Age Pension at the age of sixty-five. Similarly, the other informant [R 3] finished work in the mid-1990's, but during the last two years or so she only worked on a part-time basis, rather than full time and all year long as she had done for more than twenty years. In those final couple of years, then, she combined employment and UI income.

It is evident, then, that the provision of Unemployment Insurance which accompanied Confederation did not accrue much of a significant direct benefit to Bonavista women. As indicated in the above data, the maximum period of time that any one person received benefits was two years. This also serves as further evidence of the commitment to self-provision and work exhibited by these women throughout their lives.

In fact, the last two of the above interviewees [R 3 & R 5] were the wives of full-time, permanent, self-employed inshore fishermen who worked on shore to process the catch. Had they continued in this role, rather than taking alternative employment, they would not have been eligible to receive UI benefits on the basis of their own work until 1980.<sup>151</sup>

### Spouse's Receipt of UI

The main avenue by which Bonavista women benefitted from the provisions of UI was an indirect one—as a result of their husband's receipt of it. However, this affected women whose husbands were inshore fishermen differently than those whose husbands were otherwise employed. The latter group was potentially eligible for UI benefits just after Confederation, as soon as the system was put into place, whereas self-employed inshore fishermen did not become eligible for UI until 1958, nearly ten years after the benefit was introduced to Newfoundlanders. Even then, the regulations for fishermen were different than those pertaining to non-fishers, essentially in that fishermen could collect benefits only for a specified period of time during the off-season, while non-fishers were eligible for benefits for a significantly higher number of weeks.<sup>152</sup> Five of the respondents' husbands were self-employed inshore fishermen, but only four of the

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<sup>151</sup> Refer again to Wright, "Images of Gender," in Lives and Times, p. 143; and Silk, "Women and the Fishery," in Lives and Times, p. 268.

<sup>152</sup> McCay, "Fish Guts," in Lives and Times, p. 152; and Silk, "Women and the Fishery," in Lives and Times, p. 267.

women stated that their husbands received UI, and only three of these provided any information regarding how the receipt of UI impacted their lives.

### Inshore Fishermen

Two interviewees each explained that before her husband received UI during the winter months, most of the needs of the family were provided for on a seasonal basis by merchant credit. As such, they received payment in kind at the end of the fishing season each Fall, according to the amount of dry-salted cod they had produced. Thus, they bought staple food items in bulk at the end of the fishing season to provision them throughout the winter months. But, as Spring drew nearer it was commonplace to begin to run out of some items, and they would have to go to the merchant for more items on credit which would not be paid for until the end of the next fishing season. Once UI was added into their household budget, however, they were able to live through the winter with considerable less reliance on credit.<sup>153</sup> The promise of this extra income obviously placed them in an improved financial situation when they were paid for their catch in the Fall, and provided cash for additional necessities when these began to dwindle prior to the onset of the next season:

‘Twas some difference after years with nothing when you give up fishin’ you wouldn’t have anything until you’d go fishin’ again the next Spring.  
 ‘Twas some different, that bit a extra money was comin’ in during the winter, you’d be surprised. You could buy more things fur ya home, extra clothes fur ya children, and even extra food; something that you would

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<sup>153</sup> Refer to Appendix H: Increase in Unemployment Insurance Rates, 1950 to 1960 for 1955 and 1959 benefit figures.

have, nourishing, that you couldn't have if you only had certain budget. You couldn't waste it (UI), 'cause be all over in May, 'fraid you wouldn't get no fish in da summer; you had nothing da trust to den. **We had bad summers but we never did have da go on welfare, thank da Lord.** Times when you end up in Fall da year, years ago, you wouldn't have hardly anything; jus enough buy ya supply a food fur the winter, but be only, I'll say, rough food: tea and sugar and butter and biscuits and salt meat. Well, if you didn't rear ya own vegetables and tings like dat and keep goats and pigs and tings you wouldn't have no meat. But you'd have dat and you hang dat up out in ya store in da winter—wouldn't have no deep freeze like 'tis now—and das how you lived. And during da summer you'd save up ya eggs and put dem in a box in salt and keep 'em (i.e. dry salt—not pickle, not table salt—coarse salt). Den in da summer you'd be gettin' ya tongues and ya sounds (i.e. removed from the codfish) and tings like dat and dry saltin' dat and have dat fur in da winter...you'd have ya turbot and you'd have ya fish; you'd be finished you never had dat. If you had a few dollars den da pay ya light bill and pay ya minister/church das all you had.[R 3] (Author's Emphasis)

This excerpt essentially points out that although UI was a welcome addition to the family income, it certainly did not put the family on easy street, if you will, and they still had to be frugal. This is echoed, again, in the words of another fisherman's wife:

It (UI) made a big difference in da winter. You didn't have a budget 'cause when da fishin' was; da family was fishin', dey only use da go and fix up with da companies once a year, and dat'd be December month. So you'd get ya winter supply in and den you didn't have much cash 'til da next December, so you use da have da pinch it. But after unemployment came you had more da spend on ya family. I use da knit deir stockings, skirts, and sweaters, you know, fur da children, but when unemployment come in...you didn't have da do dat much. I still knit deir sweaters and dat but, I mean, you didn't *have* to. Den in da Fall a da year I use da go burry pickin' in on da hills when I could get a chance, and den I use da buy in like sewin' cotton and wool and yeast and stuff like dat, dat you need fur da winter; das before da unemployment come in. So I always had a supply a stuff: stove polish and soap, stuff like dat fur the winter.[R 5]

### Non-Fishermen

Another nine respondents indicated that their husbands, who were not inshore fishermen, received UI at various times during their working lives. In contrast to the above experiences, related by women whose husband's were inshore fishermen, however, there seems to be a more pervasive attitude among the wives of non-fishers that UI was not a big part of their economic livelihood and that they did not depend on it. In fact, only three of the informants' husbands received UI on a frequent and/or regular basis, while three others collected benefits only a few times during their working lives, and another three did so shortly before they retired.

### Frequent Recipients

One interviewee [R 10] stated that her husband first collected UI during the second year that it was available to Newfoundlanders.<sup>154</sup> He was employed mainly as a carpenter, and received UI benefits during the winter months; usually beginning sometime in December and continuing until the Spring weather permitted construction to resume. This woman's husband was present during some of the interview, and he explained a "supplementary" system of UI by which claimants who worked for eighteen weeks, for example, collected eighteen dollars per week on UI; or twenty-one dollars per week if they had worked for twenty-one weeks, and so forth.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Refer again to Appendix H for benefit rates.

<sup>155</sup> This concept is noted in the Official/Annual Handbook of Present Conditions and Recent Progress (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1951), p. 230: "Effective

Another respondent [R 6] stated that her husband held a variety of jobs, but that his major venue of employment was road construction, including the installation of Bonavista's water and sewer system. He, too, obtained UI after getting laid off each Fall when construction stopped, and collected benefits until Spring when construction resumed. However, the informant qualified that this was more or less bonus money and stressed that they were not totally dependent on it. She said that it "helped get through da winter" but that her husband always found other work to do including going out to the seal hunt, "to da ice fields so many Springs, in da lumber woods, and he'd go fishin' when dere was no other work da get." She gave the impression that the family was financially self-sufficient and did not need social welfare supplements of any kind, and ended by saying "we always had a dollar."

The last of the respondents' spouses [R 11] who frequently received UI worked as a general labourer. This included fresh fish processing at BCSI, as well as truck driving for local businesses. The respondent simply indicated that her husband received UI each Winter after having worked at the fish processing plant the previous summer. Another interviewee [R 4] stated that her husband did garner UI benefits but she did not provide

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July 1, 1950, the rates of contribution were increased by one cent a day for both employers and employees, to provide for the payment of supplementary benefit. Certain classes of persons who, having been employed in insurable employment or in an industry only recently come under the coverage of the Act, have insufficient contributions to qualify for regular insurance benefit, can receive supplementary benefit, at rates equal to approximately 80 p.c. (percent) of regular benefit. During 1950, supplementary benefit was payable from Feb. 28 to Apr. 15, and in subsequent years during the first three months of the year."

any details about this, other than to say “Yeah (my husband) use da get unemployment. You know, unemployment, ‘twas something special den because we wasn’t used to it.”

#### Infrequent Recipients

Another two of the nine spouses who received non-fishery UI did so only infrequently for a small portion of their working lives. One of these [R 18] collected benefits only once during his life, as far as the interviewee could recall: “I tink he drew unemployment once in his lifetime, and dat was da year after we come home from St. John’s, he was workin’ with *Stokes* in St. John’s, doin’ carpentry, and I tink he drew unemployment once.” The next informant [R 12] stated that her husband was a general labourer and took a variety of jobs including truck driving and construction work, and that he “went away wherever dere was work.” She implied that they did not rely on UI: “well, he worked a nice number a years before he drew any unemployment, you know. But dere wasn’t much difference in it, you know, he never drew it fur long. He was permanent, you know, jobs.”

#### Recipients Only Preceding Retirement

The remaining three spouses did not collect any UI benefits until the latter part of their employment years, shortly prior to their retirement. One informant [R 9] indicated that her husband retired sometime around 1970, and had worked as a janitor/caretaker at Cabot Collegiate for about three years before retiring. It was during this time, in the late 1960’s, that he received UI; in the amount of thirty dollars per week, according to the informant. Similarly, another interviewee [R 15] indicated that her husband worked as a

caretaker at the public building (Department of Public Works, Bonavista), and retired due to illness in 1972, at which time the youngest of their seven children was twelve years of age. She said that he only collected UI for a few months sometime during those last two years before he retired. Finally, the last of this group [R 13] said that her husband did receive UI “but not for long periods.” She specified that he collected some UI in combination with part-time income in his later years of employment prior to retiring: “when he was a utility worker (at Golden Heights Manor) he was part-time and some weeks he didn’t get much work and den he use da get unemployment. But, I mean, dat was only a part-time job, jus something da keep ‘en occupied, and **we weren’t dependin’ on it.**” (Author’s Emphasis)

It must be concluded, then, that unemployment insurance benefits obviously provided some amount of financial aid to Bonavista families, but not to such an overarching extent that they could not have survived without it, as they had prior to Confederation. For the most part, the greatest advantage did not accrue until decades after this social welfare initiative was initially instituted in Newfoundland. As mentioned previously, it is also obvious from these accounts of the experience of UI receipt that Bonavista women and their families held a proud and strong attitude and ethic for work and self-sufficiency which is echoed in their rejection of a dependence on social welfare in the form of unemployment insurance. As will be seen in the final section of this chapter, though, this adamancy may also be a reflection of the interviewees’ disapproval

of present-day circumstances in which the current generation of Bonavista families, from their viewpoint, have come to rely heavily on government assistance as a means of securing their economic needs.

#### Family Allowances

The baby bonus or family allowance was another of the economic incentives of Confederation which not only helped to sway the popular vote in favor of joining the Canadian union, but which has also been heralded in the traditional political and economic historiography of Newfoundland, as well as through public opinion, as having had a major monetary impact upon the lives of Newfoundland women because it put cash into their hands for the very first time. The record of women's paid employment both before and during marriage provided in chapter three, however, repudiates this claim by demonstrating that outport women, at least in Bonavista, were not sitting by waiting for the Canadian government to shower them with blessings, so to speak. Instead, these women were taking employment locally, regionally, and nationally, and working for pay both inside and outside the household, as well as performing non-paid subsistence and budget-boosting activities to secure their own economic livelihood. Moreover, the following responses by Bonavista women regarding their receipt of the baby bonus contain a general consensus that this money was a help but that the amount, in and of itself, was too small to make any great difference to the financial circumstances of the

family. Most of the seventeen women who discussed this also said that they spent the money on clothes and school-related expenses for their children.

All but one of the twenty women interviewed had at least one child before Confederation. However, there is some discrepancy among informants as to the amount of money which they received during the first years that the benefit was paid to them. This is probably because some women were referring to the amount per child while others noted the total amount which they received on the basis of the number of children they had at that time. The amounts varied, per household, based on the number of children and their ages, with older children receiving a little more than younger ones. However, the majority of respondents' recollection as to the amount of their first baby bonus cheques was not far askew from the official figures. The benefit amounts from 1949 to 1957 consisted of five dollars for children under the age of six, six dollars for those between the ages of six and nine, seven for those ages ten to twelve, and eight dollars for children ages thirteen to fifteen. On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1957 the rates changed to six dollars for children younger than age ten, and eight dollars for those from ten to fifteen years of age. These rates did not increase again until late in 1973 when there was a uniform increase to twelve dollars per month for all children under sixteen years of age. This benefit was raised again as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1974 to twenty dollars per month for all

children under eighteen years of age, with specification that the rate would be “escalated annually in accordance with the Consumer Price Index.”<sup>156</sup>

Five of the interviewees stated that the first baby bonus which they collected was five dollars per child per month. One of these [R 10] said “it was a good help but we didn’t get enough da pay fur da milk fur ‘em.” She went on to indicate that she “went through” one case of tinned milk per month per child, and that the cost of milk was eleven cents per can; a total of two dollars and sixty-four cents for a case of twenty-four. At this rate, then, more than half of the allowance for a child who was not weaned was spent on formula alone by mothers who did not breast feed. This woman had a total of twelve children, and the first four were born in 1948, 1949, 1950, and 1951, so she would have been receiving a total of twenty dollars per month in family allowance following the birth of her fourth child in 1951.

Another informant [R 5] had three children born in 1944, 1947, and 1952, respectively. Thus, her first baby bonus benefits would have been ten dollars per month and then eleven dollars when her oldest child turned six. She said “dat was a help on deir school fees which was three dollars a month, so you had two da spare.” This comment highlights the fact that schools in Newfoundland were denominational at the time, and that parishioners had to pay for their children’s education at their chosen church-operated

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<sup>156</sup> These figures are outlined in the Official/Annual Handbook of Present Conditions and Recent Progress (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics) 1950, p. 68; 1951, p. 87; 1957, p. 272; 1958, p. 270; 1959, p. 256; 1974, p. 193; 1975, pp. 227-228, and 1976, p. 227.

school. This woman noted that the fee cost was “three dollars fur one (child), fur da oldest, and I think it was a dollar fur da second, ‘er a dollar fifty, something like dat.” Another informant [R 3], whose last child was born in 1964, similarly stated “I could pay her school fee; I’d take her bonus and pay da fee outta dat. Every three months you use da have pay certain amount a money, I tink it was eight dollars per child, and as da years went den it went up higher.”

Most of the remaining respondents made brief comments stating that family allowances helped to pay for clothes and school-related expenses for their children. One [R 15] said “It wasn’t dat much but it helped a little, especially if dey wére goin’ da school.” Another [R 6] explained that the bonus “helped get dem something dey wanted dat you couldn’t otherwise afford...help buy deir books...and give ‘em extra pocket money.” A third [R 12] said “well, it was a help, you know, because wages was low.”

The youngest daughter of the eldest of the twenty informants echoed the above sentiments, and recounted the financial circumstances of her family in the years following the death of her father in 1952, at which time she was only seven years old and her sisters were seventeen and eighteen, respectively:

I guess, maid, most a mine (baby bonus) was spent on school and, I’d say, clothing, you know, ‘cause Dad was dead... I don’t know how we managed. She (referring to her mother) use da get seventy-five dollars a month way back den, and twenty-five fur da children was in school; well dere was two of us left in school, and she use da buy coal and everyting out of it fur da winter. I dunno how she use da manage it. One year I wanted a pair rubbers fur da winter. See, when we were growin’ up you always used da rubbers you’d put over ya shoe. And I was about twelve, I s’pose, ‘er thirteen, da first time dat da boot like we’d wear now dat you

just slip ya feet in, and I said to Mom all da girls is gettin' rubbers, boots, dis winter mom, dey haven't got da put on shoes, dey jus puts deir foot down in 'em. I said, can I have a pair? And she said, my maid, I can't afford da give ya ner pair yet, time I buys coal, mom said, fur da winter I won't have any money left. And what I went and done was, I had a uncle not married, and I went and told 'en, and he said my maid if you wants a pair boots and ya mother can't afford it, I'll give 'em to ya. If I was a good drawer I could draw out dem now, you know das da only pair a boots over da years dat stuck in my mind, and das a good many years; I'm fifty-two now and I was 'bout twelve 'er thirteen den. So now she had her struggle after Dad died. Dat was workman's compensation den she got see after Dad died: seventy-five dollars a month plus twenty-five fur a child goin' da school, but once dey finished school dat was it right; twenty-five fur me and twenty-five fur (my sister), so dat was fifty a month, plus da seventy-five. Dat had da cover everything, food and ya coal and everything.[R 17]<sup>157</sup>

Similarly, the second eldest of the informants [R 1] indicated that she used the baby bonus money to buy clothes for her children. Being the wife of a fisherman, she also explained that the baby bonus was a guaranteed source of income which improved her capacity to obtain credit from the local merchant, at least for the purchase of clothing and other items for her children: "If you didn't have anough (money), da shopkeeper let ya have it and when you get ya baby bonus agin you'd pay fur dat."

The above comments reflect the fact that the system of social welfare in Newfoundland was still in the early stages of development during the mid-twentieth century. As such, the provision of family allowance, for example, was in some measure

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<sup>157</sup> See E. Patricia Sheppard and Janet E. Miller Pitt, "Health, subheading *Occupational Health and Safety*," in *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* Vol. II (St. John's, NF: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Limited, First Edition 1984), p. 886. Also refer to *Official/Annual Handbook*, 1951, p. 92-93; 1952, p. 93.

negated by the restrictions of government funding and influence in the church-operated school system. This is not to infer that the money did not contribute to the family budget. Indeed, it was significant, if for no other reason, because it was a guaranteed, fixed sum which was paid out on a regular basis, as long as the eligibility requirements were met.

#### Receipt of Old Age Pensions by Informants Parents and/or In-Laws

The Old Age Pension benefit was another social welfare initiative which affected the financial well-being of Bonavista women and their families. Such was the case in that fifteen of the twenty respondents lived with either their own or their husbands' parents—the latter was most often the case—for varying periods of time following marriage. In fact, eight of the fifteen lived with parents for the long term, generally until the parents passed away, while the other seven lived with parents or parents-in-law on a more short-term, temporary basis. Again, respondents were roughly accurate in their recollections of the amounts of old age benefits collected by their specified relatives both before and after Confederation, since all of the respondents addressed in this section were married between the years 1940 and 1950.

The Royal Commission Report on Health and Public Charities of 1930 addressed the meager level of assistance stipulated for the elderly. The rate was fifty dollars per year for males seventy-five years and older; and widows had to apply to the government so as to continue receiving this pension after their husbands died. In addition to noting the very high—and no doubt somewhat unrealistic—age requirement, the commissioners

concluded that fifty dollars per year was totally inadequate and that neither elderly pensioners nor widows could secure daily living necessities on this allowance. They recommended that the rate be doubled, to one-hundred dollars per year, in both instances.<sup>158</sup> This recommendation was not instituted. The Health and Public Welfare Act of 1931 extended relief monies to the elderly in the amount of six to eight dollars every three months. "Before 1943 pensions of up to fifty dollars a year were being paid to men and widows over the age of seventy-five where there was evidence of need." In 1943 this escalated to a monthly rate of six dollars for singles and ten for married pairs.<sup>159</sup> In 1946, J. R. Smallwood indicated that, before 1944, persons over seventy years of age could receive as much as twenty-five dollars per month, or three-hundred dollars per year, if their annual income from other sources did not exceed sixty-five dollars. In 1944, the latter amount increased to one-hundred and twenty-five dollars. Confederation promised a uniform annual rate of three-hundred and sixty dollars per year to all those over the age of sixty-five but under that of seventy.<sup>160</sup> Commencing January 1952, the federal Old Age Security Program provided a monthly pension of forty dollars to all Canadians

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<sup>158</sup> First Interim Report of The Royal Commission on Health and Public Charities (St. John's, NF: Office of the King's Printer, June 1930), pp. 199-201.

<sup>159</sup> Allison Bates, "Old Age Pensions," in Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador Vol. IV (St. John's, NF: Harry Cuff Publications, 1993), p. 162.

<sup>160</sup> Joseph R. Smallwood, "The Gospel of Confederation: Book One," in Joseph R. Smallwood, ed., The Book of Newfoundland Vol. III (St. John's, NF: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Limited, 1967), pp. 42-43, 54.

exceeding seventy years of age. The Old Age Assistance Act extended an additional forty dollars per month, maximum, to those between sixty-five and sixty-nine years of age. The total annual income ceiling for single pensioners was seven-hundred and twenty dollars, while that for married couples was twelve hundred dollars. Both amounts were increased to forty-six dollars per month effective July 1957, and to fifty-five dollars per month by 1958; with annual income maximums of nine-hundred and sixty dollars for single recipients, and sixteen-hundred and twenty dollars for married couples.<sup>161</sup>

### Short-Term

The first of those informants who lived with parents for a short time [R 10] lived with her husbands' parents for only three to four months after marriage. She stated that her father-in-law probably received about forty dollars per month in Old Age Pension (hereafter OAP). The next woman [R 5] said "I lived about seven months with my parents after (marriage), and den I moved to my own house." She did not recall her father receiving OAP at this time, and indicated that he was working at Gander. Thus, it is likely that he did not meet the age requirement and was not yet eligible for OAP. A third interviewee [R 13] said "we lived with (my husband's) father—his mother was already dead—for about a year." She confirmed that "he would have been gettin' it (OAP) because he died in 1953 and he was eighty-eight when he died." However, she had no

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<sup>161</sup> Official/Annual Handbook, 1952, p. 89; 1953, p. 94; 1957, p. 273; 1958, p. 270.

idea of the amount of OAP her father-in-law would have received. Another [R 20] respondent, who married in 1945, also lived with her husband's parents for a short time following marriage. She stated "I lived dere one year while we were doin' our house up. Yeah, dey got old age allowance, I tink. Dey usein' get very much in dese days; use da get about seventy-five dollars a month. Yeah, I tink das what dey use da get, in dat area anyway." A fifth woman [R 12] said that they lived with her husband's parents for about a year and a half after they got married. However, her in-laws were still of working age at the time and therefore not receiving OAP. The eldest of all twenty respondents [R 17], who married in 1934, said that they lived with her husband's step-mother for upwards of five years until she died. Her response to whether or not the woman received any sort of old age allowance was "not as I know fur, I don't tink." The last of the seven [R 4] respondents who lived with parents temporarily after marriage indicated that they lived with her husband's father, but she did not specify exactly how long.

### Long-Term

Another eight of the respondents lived with their parents or parents-in-law on a much longer, more permanent basis, often from the time of marriage until the death of the parents. The first [R 14] of these informants indicated that she lived with her husband's father for eleven years after marriage, and that her father-in-law did receive OAP but she did not know the amount of benefit which he obtained. The next interviewee [R 18] lived with her husband's parents for twenty-two years until her father-in-law and, later, her

mother-in-law had passed away. She was unsure of whether or not they had received

OAP:

No, not fur me da remember; I don't tink dey got anything. What you had da get den you had da save up fur da winter; you made ya money in da summertime you had da save dat fur da wintertime. I can remember (my mother-in-law) and dem gettin' deir pension, a pension, but I dunno what kind a pension it was. Dey hadda get something. Well, see, da pension started... jus after Confederation. after dat dey started gettin' deir pension, like everybody else. I can't remember how much but I know dat she was gettin' a pension.

Another interviewee [R 11] lived with her husband's mother for the entire twenty-seven years of her married life until she left her husband and subsequently divorced from him. She did not indicate whether or not her mother-in-law reached the age of eligibility for OAP during those years, but she did say "I remember years ago, when I first got married (1944), (my husband's) grandmother was gettin' nine dollars, 'er something, every three months; das all dey were gettin', 'cause I use da change her cheque for her."

The remaining five interviewees lived with in-laws from the time they married until the death of their in-laws, but none of these five indicated the number of years that they lived with their husband's parents. One woman [R 8] stated that her in-laws had received OAP "...but dey didn't get like dey gets now...dey didn't get dat much, only 'twas enough fur derselves." Similarly, another woman [R 9] said that her father-in-law collected OAP but that "first when it came out 'twas only low." Despite this, she also said that this money did contribute to the family budget. A third respondent [R 6] stated that her father-in-law received OAP and recognized that "you had da be seventy da get it

den.” She said that this did not make a significant difference to the household budget because he “...always had a dollar.” Her explanation of this suggested that her father-in-law probably worked as a fisherman while also collecting OAP. She conceded that “after he got sick it was good because he still had a income, but it was not like you had nothing else and you’re waitin’ fur it da come.”

A fourth [R 3] respondent, somewhat of an anomaly among the group, stated “(my husband) had this house bought when we got married and dey lived with us; his father lived with me until he died, but his mother only lived couple years after I got married.” As for her father-in-law receiving OAP, she said “It was only late years he did...dey were like us; goin’ fishin’, on da flakes makin’ fish and everything. (My husband) was fishin’ with his uncles but (my father-in-law) had (my husband’s) two brothers goin’ with ‘em.” This woman further explained that although her father-in-law continued to work as an inshore fisherman while living with her, his receipt of OAP did help with the household budget to the extent that it put extra cash in their hands and enabled them to purchase items that they could not otherwise afford, or to buy more ready-made clothing and a greater variety of food items.

The last of the respondents [R 1] who lived with parents following marriage noted that she lived with her husband’s mother until she passed away. Although she did not mention her mother-in-law having received OAP, she did indicate that her husband, who was twenty-seven years her senior, received seventy-five dollars per month prior to his

death in 1958. She said “tings was cheap den, ya know, what would ya get now fur seventy-five dollars?”

### Learning From Their Experiences

Apart from asking respondents about the effects of unemployment insurance, family allowances, and old age pensions on the family budget and their daily lives, the final question put to respondents asked them to reflect back over their various life experiences and to suggest what present and future generations might learn from such experiences. Several women referred to the need to engage in budget-boosting and self-provisioning activities, to the value of hard work, and the necessity of thriftiness. One woman [R 7], for instance, talked about being frugal with food, and pointed to the need for parents to spend more time with their children:

Years ago, if you cooked dinner what you had left over you'd warm it up fur supper. But what I find now da young ones, not all of 'em, I sees more throwed in da garbage dan what I had when I was growin' up. What dey got left, shore (sure), 'tis in da garbage, dere's no takin' it and puttin' it one side and warmin' it up fur da next day or warmin' it up fur supper. And da youngsters, too much goin' to restaurants, old chips and stuff like dat, dey's not made da sit down and eat deir meals, you know, like when I was raisin' mine. You had a dress, you had da keep dat fur Sunday's, you wouldn't put dat on in da week, when I was growin' up. Everything had da be put one side fur Sunday's ... dey had da go da church and dey had da go da Sunday school. And da parents is not home with deir children...all I seen was a clothesline when I was bringin' up my family, every day lines a clothes. And now da parents night time Bingo, card parties, goin' around everywhere, and gettin' divorced...I don't know, 'tis far different. Everything is a roll a money.

In a similar vein, another informant [R 5] alluded to the present fishery crisis and the Northern Cod Moratorium in her reflections, as if to say that this is too often used as an excuse for the inability to provide for one's own needs:

When my husband was fishin', well, dere was da father and dere was so many brothers, dey never always struck fish and dey had three traps. Dere was years dat we did very poor, but still in all you'd live. **I didn't have no welfare no time. We managed by hard work and bein' careful.** I made me own bread, I made me own whatever I wanted baked I use da bake it, and you had jam. **Dere's more thrown away now dan I reared my family on.** In da Fall when you fixed up if you was in da Orange Lodge you'd take out ya fee fur dat, take out da church, and you use da have da pay da hospital so much, so everything be taken out and ya food be bought in and dat'd be it. And dere wouldn't be so much fur Christmas like dere is now. You know, you'd budget. (Author's Emphasis)

A third interviewee [R 12] stated that the present generation of Bonavista residents, in her view, do not seem as willing to make the kind of effort required to survive without state intervention, as if it is too difficult, or altogether too much trouble. She said "well, people worked years ago, you know, and now dey don't try... seem to me people worked harder years ago dan dey do now. Da young ones don't try da, you know, work." As for Confederation, per se, she simply said "dere was a lot a change, some things fur da worse, I think."

Another woman [R 4] provided a very poignant commentary on the abuse of the welfare system:

I lived with my in-laws, with (my husband's) father. You had da go with ya in-laws den, and if you left ya husband you had da go back with ya father, and if you had a baby and you didn't get married, ya parents had da rear it up. Dere was no way den dat you'd say I don't care I got a house. You know I don't agree with what da government is doin' now. I knows

now anyone could have a baby, yes. You could go with a beautiful man and he could take ya in, after you had ya child he could leave ya, and here you're left with a baby. Dere's a lot a good girls gets caught like dat. But, da first one yes but not da second. You know dere's more people livin' on welfare now dan what's workin'. It got da be because it looks like dere's more in Bonavista on welfare, and dere is, dan what's workin'. When I was growin' up, like I said, I went da work twelve years old, and den when we got married we had da work because if we didn't work dere was no money, and what we couldn't get we had da be willing da do without. We couldn't go to welfare and get what we want, and if I left (my husband)...I'm goin' to a welfare house, you can come dere night time. Dis is what's goin' on in Bonavista, I can tell ya, and I'd tell dat to da government man if he was here. I don't agree with it, dey should put those people da work, strong and healthy people not doin' one ting, and here we is payin' out tax. Go to da store with twenty dollars, a hundred dollars, you can't see what you buys, we's payin' tax doubled, and 'tis not good enough what dey're doin' with people. Da poor workin' man das da one das sufferin'. I don't begrudge nothing to nobody but I don't agree with what da government is doin' with da young people. ... It can't go on like dis.

Again, this commentary is a reflection of the work-ethic which was characteristic of this generation, and it lends insight into the negative attitude of respondents toward the provision of social assistance to young and working-age men and women who ought to be doing more to earn their own living.

Another informant [R 3] also referred to the physical exercise which people automatically benefitted from as a result of the types of work which they performed on a regular basis, as opposed to the increasingly sedentary lifestyle of today's generation:

we use da have get up in da morning bring barrels a water, den you go in da woods and get some boughs and bring out fur da light ya fire. Go over on da barrens we use da call it, da hills, and you pull up some blackburry bushes and put dem out da dry...for lightin' da fire with ya splits and wood...want a quick fire in you push in a few blackberry bushes and ya kettle boil in a few minutes. You had no 'lectricity; no 'lectric kettles den

or 'lectric stoves. Well shore (sure) dat was all exercise, whereas now dey got everything do their work with and they're sittin' around puttin' on weight, no exercise whatsoever.

Other respondents recognized that the lifestyle of Bonavista residents has changed to such a degree over the past fifty years that people can hardly be expected to return to the traditional means of securing a living. One woman [R 11] reflected on the difference in the requirements for raising children and said:

well, I don't think dey'd go back to what I did because like I said I had da wash clothes on da scrubbin' board. Dere was no pampers, and now all dey got da do is go out and buy it and take it off and throw it in da garbage. I had da wash all dat. So I don't think da ones das rearin' deir families da day would go back to when I reared mine, I wouldn't if I was in deir shoes.

Similarly, another respondent [R 20], who raised fifteen children, made the point that people of today's generation would not be able to cope with such a situation because they simply have not been exposed to it, and because technology has radically changed their way of life:

I dunno what dis generation'd do, I tink dey'd go nuts if dey had da go through something like dat. I tink I would myself too. Young people wouldn't survive now. Well, dey would if dey was used to dat, yeah, shore (sure) dey would jus same as I did. But da way it is now, year after year, tings are changin' sa much, you know, 'tis so much different. You haven't got da do da day like you did dese days. **We had da do everything da hard way but everything is done now by machinery.** You haven't got da do anything with ya hands now but we had da do everything den. So much change, things are so much different.  
(Author's Emphasis)

As for Confederation, she said that it “made changes everywhere, in Newfoundland anyway. Some was fur better, more was fur worse.”

As well, a daughter of one informant [R 18] was present during her mother’s interview, and took much interest in this particular topic of discussion. In reference to her own knowledge of her mother’s life and the lifestyle of previous generations of Bonavista residents, she said “well, to me it sounds like life was more fulfilling den dan what it is now...like nowadays its like no one knows where dey’re goin’, but dem days, I mean, you did what you had da do, and dere was a time fur everything, you know. I mean, dere’s sa much on da go now but still dere’s nothing da do.” Her mother added “yes, life mighta been tough regards a havin’ everything you want, but still ‘twas happy times.” Much like the previous respondent, this woman’s daughter also talked about the difference in the lifestyle of present generations, and said “what you did get you appreciated, not like now. Like, some people say, well, dey don’t have da have it, but da times have changed, and dey do have da have it. Da way things have gone is what’s got it made hard...it’s just da way tings are gone, and dere’s nothin’ you can do about it; I mean das da way it is now.” Finally, another woman [R 4] concluded her interview with this comment:

Everything is changed around like somebody said: We always use da eat in our house, but now we eats outdoors; and we’d always go outside da use da bathroom, but now we does dat inside...and ‘tis true. Das true, we eats more outside now, especially in da summer. Most everybody got a picnic table now, but we’s not fussy over dat because we’s not used to it see. ‘Tis not da same ‘cause we’s not brought up da same.

This once again highlights the transition from traditional to modern lifestyles, and serves to indicate that this change included a modified work ethic among the “modern” generation.

This chapter has presented ample evidence to suggest that the most commonly acquired social welfare benefits rendered to Newfoundlanders following Confederation were not as overwhelmingly advantageous toward women as one might have previously assumed. In fact, it has been proven that Bonavista women, in particular, did not receive any immediate or direct monetary benefits in any substantial amounts in the form of social welfare transfers. Instead, women only obtained low levels of financial aid from unemployment insurance, family allowances, and old age pensions via their status as wives, mothers, daughters and daughters-in-law; that is, from their husbands receipt of unemployment insurance, their children’s receipt of family allowance, and their parents or parents-in-law receipt of old age pension. Perhaps the most important aspect of this examination, though, is that it documents and clarifies the transition to a cash and wage economy and the subsequent changes in and reorganization of the concept and practice of work in outport Newfoundland.

## Chapter VII - Conclusion

To some extent, this work took Janice Reid's B.A. Honours Dissertation "Changing with the Times: Women, Household Economy and Confederation" as its theoretical starting point. Reid posited that conventional perceptions about the importance of the baby bonus do not adequately or accurately account for the impact of Confederation on the lives of Newfoundland residents, particularly women. She argued that other factors, such as industrialization and the world wars, both independently and in combination with others, including Confederation, likely had a deeper and farther-reaching influence on the lives of Newfoundland women than the baby bonus cheque which they received as a result of Confederation.

### Summary of Findings from the Bonavista Data

The data presented in this work furnish first-hand proof to support Reid's assertions. It shows that Bonavista women worked in both the formal and informal economy, both within the household and outside of it, and that they had developed a strong and proud work ethic in the pre-Confederation years which sustained them throughout their working lives. While it indicates that the value of the baby bonus to Newfoundland women and their children was indeed overestimated in much of the traditional rhetoric in support of Confederation and in the literature on this subject, then, this data also negates the political stance which championed the baby bonus as an initiative which put money into the hands of Newfoundland women for the very first

time. Clearly, many women entered the paid workforce prior to marriage, and either continued or returned to paid employment during their married lives. In addition, the Bonavista data also provide substantial evidence that the provision of unemployment insurance—which Reid recognized as a potentially more beneficial social welfare program, in monetary terms, than family allowances—was of only modest value to Bonavista women and their families. Only twenty-five percent of respondents ever received unemployment insurance benefits themselves. Of these, just one received these monies while still raising children. The others were not recipients of these benefits until after their children were grown. Thus, the main venue by which they obtained any financial assistance at all from the unemployment insurance program was through their husband's benefits. Furthermore, those women whose husbands were self-employed inshore fishermen did not receive it via this indirect route until 1958.

#### How this Thesis Informs and Expands the Existing Literature

These findings add to the already existing literature on women's work in industrializing economies and developing systems of social welfare. The most prominent conclusion drawn from the melding of these two literatures is that women in both Newfoundland and Canada juggled household and family responsibilities with various forms of paid employment. There is a recurring theme emphasizing that women worked out of economic necessity to ensure the survival of themselves and their families despite often vehement opposition aimed at the preservation of a domestic ideology for females

and the subsequent myth of the male breadwinner earning a family wage. As a result, women initially obtained very little financial benefit from early social welfare initiatives, largely because barriers were intentionally written into the legislation in an attempt to maintain the status quo.

In addition to presenting original, primary documentation which dissipates certain myths and theories regarding Confederation, this research also presents vivid illustrations and analysis of the transition from traditional to modern lifestyles and its impact upon the daily lives of Bonavista women. One of many striking examples of this is, indeed, that involving the change brought to women's work schedules and routines as a result of the advent of various technological and labour-saving devices and products for the household. Indoor running water, electric washing machines, and javex bleach replaced the process of bringing water in buckets and heating it on a wood stove, boiling out stains from clothing in a large boiler of lye simmering on the wood stove, and subsequently washing clothes using a scrubbing board and tub.

This analysis of women's work in both the formal and informal economic sectors, and in the areas of procreation and family health, also brings the historiography closer to placing a specific dollar value—as opposed to an estimate of contribution in kind—on women's work to the total budget of the household. That is, by looking at women's collective work activities (domestic work, inshore fishery work, market-oriented, commodity production, and reproduction), one gets a more holistic view of the continuity of work required and performed by women in the maintenance of their families.

This examination of the day to day lived experiences of Bonavista women, at the micro level, over a span of thirty years—in juxtaposition with the analysis of women's employment and social welfare history, at the macro level—effectively demonstrates that industrialization and modernization are complex and gradual processes. That is, the transition from traditional to modern is not an instant or overnight transformation from one mode of living to another. It stands to reason, therefore, that the lives of Bonavista women were not automatically changed as of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1949 when Newfoundland confederated with Canada. Modernization and Confederation, as political and theoretical constructs in the academic mind, have too often been construed as measures which can and do transform society with the throwing of a switch. The historical record clarifies that when political and economic policies are put into practice, their effects are subtle and eventual, and operate in conjunction with existing and newly occurring factors and incidents to produce results which can vary from one environment to another.

#### Implications of this Research as per the Eco-Research Mandate of Sustainability

The Tri-Council Eco-Research Program focused on the historical and future utilization and management of a “multiplicity” of resources with a goal “to identify the central components required to achieve sustainability for cold ocean coastal communities.”<sup>162</sup> This included a core recognition that resource diversification is

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<sup>162</sup> Ommer, “*Proposal*,” p. 4.

tantamount to such an effort, and that the primary resource is the human one. That is, local residents are the key players in the sustainability equation since they have potential control of all other resources in their environment, and because they have played a pivotal role in the survival of their communities to the present day. Historically, outport people have migrated for employment when local resources were overtaxed; they found ways to provide for their material needs when these were not readily available, and engaged in any activity necessary so as to secure a livelihood. Again, this study is a testament to the fact that such was the case after Confederation as well as before it.

It is clear, however, that the viability of outport communities is an on-going, daily concern which must continue to be addressed if the people still living in them are to exist with some measure of productivity and quality of life. The Eco-Research mandate and the findings of this research compel us to consider what aspects of modernization have been problematic, as opposed to beneficial and uplifting as modernization theory espouses, and how these can be altered to result in the betterment of coastal communities. In conjunction, we should also ask whether a return to certain aspects of the traditional lifestyle, at least to some extent or in some modified form, might provide a solution to the identified problems which have been attributed to industrialization and modernization.

One of the main areas requiring modification, as identified by the informants, is that involving the availability of medical services in Bonavista. The financial constraints of the federal and provincial governments, along with the difficulties associated with recruiting and subsequently employing medical personnel in more remote parts of the

province on a long-term or permanent basis, seem to be the main reasons for substandard health care at Bonavista, not to mention many other regions of the province, both urban and rural. Given informants' comments on this topic, along with their descriptions of their birthing experiences, it seems that one of the possible solutions which is worth considering is that of a return to the provision of prenatal and maternal health care, and to the practice of midwifery, at the local hospital level.

This option would contribute toward economic diversification for unemployed residents, if both training and job opportunities for such work was locally available. It holds the potential to be one retraining alternative for which the newly acquired skills can be put into practice in a work role; and it can be a long-term solution, rather than a temporary or "make-work" employment initiative. More importantly, it addresses the frustration of coastal residents who argue that retraining is of little benefit to them because there are few job prospects based on the programs of study which have been offered. As such, it is also an example of economic diversification which is controlled and utilized by local people, rather than being superimposed upon them. Finally, it is one option which does not infringe upon efforts toward environmental conservation and natural resource sustainability, since it goes beyond the movement from one resource to another to focus on meaningful, non-resource based educational and employment alternatives. Thus, it may serve as a test case to determine if similar solutions could be applied in other cold ocean coastal communities in Newfoundland and other regions of

Canada, thereby lending further insight into the types of measures required to sustain such communities in the twenty-first century.

The above recommendations aside, though, the most fundamental outcome of this research is that the voices of the Bonavista women who participated in it and ultimately made it possible have been heard and heeded. If nothing else, this study is proof positive that women can and do make valuable contributions to the families and communities in which they live, and that the collecting and recording of their opinions and experiences, even those which may seem mundane and common, contain inestimable lessons which may well provide the underpinnings of future policy.

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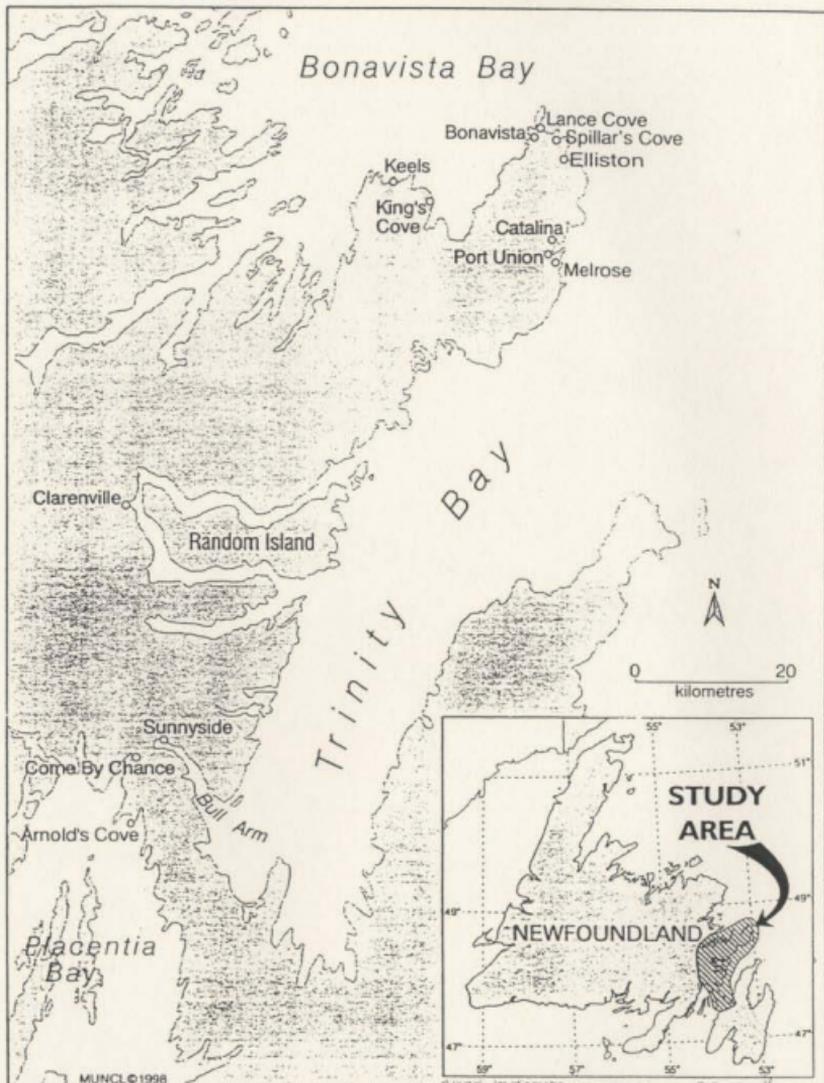
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Appendix A: Eco-Research Program Map



**Appendix B: Research Instrument**

Women, Household Economy, and the Welfare State  
The Impact of Confederation on the Lives of Bonavista Women  
1945 to 1960

DATE OF INTERVIEW: \_\_\_\_\_ NO: \_\_\_\_\_

TIME STARTED: \_\_\_\_\_ TIME FINISHED: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Maiden name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Community of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Birth (home/hospital): \_\_\_\_\_

Delivered by (midwife/nurse/doctor): \_\_\_\_\_

Other Attendant(s): \_\_\_\_\_

If not born at Bonavista, when did you move: \_\_\_\_\_

Why did you move: \_\_\_\_\_

Where did you go to school: \_\_\_\_\_

How far did you go in school: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you grow up in that religion: \_\_\_\_\_

When did you get married: \_\_\_\_\_

Where: \_\_\_\_\_

How many children did you have: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\* Record names and dates of birth on separate child forms**

Did you have any miscarriages: \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how many and when: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you have any still births: \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how many and when: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\* Go to Work History Questions Here, Spouse Form First**

If respondent or spouse ever recieved UI:

How did you feel about UI, and in what ways did it change/affect the family?

Did you and your husband live with parents (or other elderly family members) or have them living with you after 1949:

If yes, did these household members receive Old Age Pension:

Did this change your household income and budget:

If so, in what way(s):

Did you receive family allowance/baby bonus:

Did this change anything for yourself and/or your family:

If yes, explain:

Did you experience any changes in housework during the years before and after Confederation?

washing clothes: \_\_\_\_\_

preparing meals: \_\_\_\_\_

housecleaning: \_\_\_\_\_

specify others: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you experience any changes in childcare?

caring for common illnesses: \_\_\_\_\_

infant feeding: \_\_\_\_\_

diapering: \_\_\_\_\_

specify others: \_\_\_\_\_

Was there much change in types of products available in local stores?

health care products/medicines: \_\_\_\_\_

groceries: \_\_\_\_\_

household products/cleaning: \_\_\_\_\_

feminine products: \_\_\_\_\_

specify others: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you, your husband, and/or family members ever grow your own vegetables or keep your own animals:

If yes:

What did you grow:

What animals did you keep:

Did you continue to do so after Confederation:

If you stopped, can you remember when and why:

Were there any other things that you did to help keep the family going:

What kinds of things:

Do you recall if there was much change in health care here after Confederation? Did you experience differences in health care during pregnancy and birth, for example?

Are there any other things that happened with/after Confederation that you think changed your life or the circumstances of your family/household:

What were they:

How did they change your life:

Do you think that there were any parts of your life experience that people today could learn from, or were there any things that you used to do in your daily life that you think we could benefit from doing?

**Child of Respondent**

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview NO: \_\_\_\_\_

date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

place of birth (home/hospital): \_\_\_\_\_

delivered by (midwife/nurse/doctor): \_\_\_\_\_

other attendant(s): \_\_\_\_\_

condition of health at birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Did this child survive: \_\_\_\_\_

If not, what was the cause of death: \_\_\_\_\_

date of death: \_\_\_\_\_

Did anyone (midwife, nurse, doctor) look after you during this pregnancy:

Did you have any sickness or health problems during this pregnancy:

What was the birth like:

**Work History of Respondent's Spouse**

Name of Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview NO: \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of work did your husband do: \_\_\_\_\_

Did he do that work all of his life: \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, who did he work for: \_\_\_\_\_

If not, what were the various jobs your husband had over the years (from earliest to most recent, if possible, and who was the employer):

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

Did your husband ever receive Unemployment Insurance:

Can you remember the first time that he received it:

Did this change anything for the family:

## Respondent Work History

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview NO: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you ever work outside the home/for pay: \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what kind of work did you do: \_\_\_\_\_

Who did you work for: \_\_\_\_\_

when did you work [before or after (A)marriage (B)confederation]:

Did you have any other jobs (who were the employers):

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

Did you ever receive Unemployment Insurance Benefits:

When was the first time you received benefits:

Did you ever work as a domestic:

Did you work at curing fish:

## Appendix C: Certificate of Ethical Acceptability



## Memorial

University of Newfoundland

Department of  
French and Spanish

DATE: 25<sup>th</sup> June 97

TO: Dr Rosemary O'Connor for student THERESA HEATH.

FROM: J. H a r e, Chairperson, Arts Research Committee

SUBJECT: Enclosed Certificate re Ethical Responsibility

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Please find enclosed a signed certificate regarding the ethical acceptability of your research project application as assessed by three members of the Arts Research Committee.

For any clarification, please contact me at S-4039, Ext. 8571

Sincerely,

J. Hare  
Chairperson  
Arts Research Committee

1 enclosure



**Memorial**  
University of Newfoundland

**CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY  
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**

Date 5 June 97  
 Name of applicant HEATH, TERESA  
 Department HISTORY  
 Agency TRI-COUNCIL EDO. RESEARCH PROGRAM  
 Title of project "WOMEN, HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY AND THE WELFARE  
STATE THE IMPACT OF CONFEDERATION ON THE  
LIVES OF BONAVISTA WOMEN 1945 TO 1960"

We the undersigned members of the Memorial University of Newfoundland Arts Research Committee, having examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects

**MEMBERSHIP OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE**

<u>NAME</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>SIGNATURE</u>
-------------	-------------------	-----------------	------------------

\_\_\_\_\_  
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

\_\_\_\_\_  
DEAN OF FACULTY

\_\_\_\_\_  
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF  
RESEARCH for President

### Appendix D: Respondent Release Form

Women, Household Economy, and the Welfare State, 1945-1960  
M.A. Thesis Respondent Release Form

Please read the following carefully before deciding whether or not to proceed. The following interview questions have been compiled by a graduate student in history (Theresa Heath Rodgers) to be included in a masters thesis which is focusing on how the social welfare changes brought with Confederation affected the lives of women living and raising families in Bonavista at the time. This study is a small part of the larger, interdisciplinary Eco-Research Program which has been ongoing at Memorial University of Newfoundland for the past three years.

The many changes which Confederation brought to Newfoundland and its people have already been widely documented, but the ways in which such changes impacted the lives of women, in particular, have not. We already know much about how Confederation altered the operation of the fishing industry, for example, but very little has been written about how it changed women's work roles and household budgeting.

Your cooperation in this research will enable us to produce a rich piece of written work which gives detailed first-hand accounts of how women in Bonavista managed their households and families, and the changes they experienced, between the years 1945 to 1960. As well, it will give you a reason to reflect back on your life and to record your experiences. You can gladly have a copy of this interview to include in your own family history.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. Please feel free to stop the interview at any time, or decline to answer any of the questions that you are asked.

A copy of the completed thesis and the taped interviews will be placed in the archives of the Centre for Newfoundland Studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland. However, we are asking you to stipulate how this information may be used:

- The data I have given cannot be used by any other researchers without the written permission of the interviewer (Theresa Heath Rodgers)  
 ----- My identity will not be revealed in any way (In this case the information you have given will be used in a manner that keeps your identity strictly confidential)  
 ----- I have no objections to the use of my name in the thesis

Sincerely,

Rosemary Ommer  
Program Manager  
Eco-Research Program, Memorial University of Newfoundland

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E: Summary of Respondents

Birth Date	Age in 1997	Marry Date	Marry Age	No. of Kids	Grade Level	Work Before Marriage	Work During Marriage	Work After Marriage
1907	90	1934	27	3	5		curing fish	
1911	86	1928	18	6	1		curing fish	serving woman
1912	85	1932	20	9	nil	serving girl	curing fish	
1918	79	1944	26	6, 1 mis C	3	serving girl	curing fish	
1918	79	1942	24	7, 1 mis C	6 or 7	curing fish, serving girl, hospital cook		took in boarders, run supermarket
1919	78	1940	21	5	11	BCSI	some fish curing	
1920	77	1943	23	7, 1 mis C	9 or 10	some fish curing, waitress		
1922	75	1943	21	2	5 or 6	BCSI, curing fish	curing fish	
1924	73	1944	20	12	5	hospital helper, serving girl		
1924	73	1945	21	15, 1 mis C	5	BCSI, curing fish		

<b>Birth Date</b>	<b>Age in 1997</b>	<b>Marry Date</b>	<b>Marry Age</b>	<b>No. of Kids</b>	<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Work Before Marriage</b>	<b>Work During Marriage</b>	<b>Work After Marriage</b>
1924	73	1946	22	3	10	servicing girl	entrepren, took in boarders, cleaner, cook, bartender, take-out	
1925	72	1943	18	5, and twins infant death	nil		curing fish	
1926	71	1945	19	2	11		curing fish, BCSI, cashier	cashier
1926	71	1946	20	2	7	BCSI	cashier, entrepren, some fish curing	
1926	71	1944	18	4	10		took in boarders	worked in department store
1927	70	1944	17	3, and 1 still birth	10	BCSI	BCSI, curing fish, hospital cook	
1928	69	1947	19	3	10	BCSI		
1929	68	1948	19	12	4	BCSI, some fish curing		

<b>Birth Date</b>	<b>Age in 1997</b>	<b>Marry Date</b>	<b>Marry Age</b>	<b>No. of Kids</b>	<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Work Before Marriage</b>	<b>Work During Marriage</b>	<b>Work After Marriage</b>
1930	67	1950	20	3	11	some fish curing, clerical	clerical	
1931	66	1949	18	9	4	some fish curing		

\* BCSI - Bonavista Cold Storage Incorporated

\* misC - Miscarriage

## Appendix F: Respondent Commentary on Department of Health

So, anyway, I started dis little small place down dere. I'll tell ya what I had, dis is da truth, I had floor covering on da tables and da booths, 3 I believe I had dere, and I had no floor covering [on the floor]. Now da Board of Health wasn't moved in, and you could start something like dis because you wasn't bothered with da Board of Health, no inspectors then. But you had da have a licence da sell, so I got my licence. Anyway, my brother, he had a place on his shop and he had a chip fryer and a hot dog machine and I bought it...and a custard cone machine. So, anyway, I bought it and I started down dere, but da custard cone machine wouldn't work; it used da break down, it was worn out I s'pose. Anyway, I went on with it, and I remembers I used da walk da floor: well, what did I take da bit a money we had put away in da bank and now go at dis, now whatta we gonda do, das all gone. Anyway, da first day I opened I believe 'twas four dollars I took in, and den I went on from dat and den build up and build up like six to eight [Dollars] like dat. So everything I take out of it down dere I put me money back, you know, I wouldn't take nothin' unless I put my money dere. I went on like dat and den I build on after, 'cardins I get da money, I build on; wouldn't owe no money. So, anyway, we had da games den, and I used da sell chips and drinks...and do you know a plate a chips was fifteen cents, a small plate, and da big plate was twenty-five, and da hamburgers was thirty-five cents, a bottle a drink was ten. So dey used da get a bottle a drink and a plate a chips fur twenty-five cents, no tax. Den I got a jukebox [laughs] ...so anyway it went on, and someone said, if you had a pool game ... oh my blessed, I said, I got no place da put a pool game, but I said I got da build on 'cause 'tis too small.

...And I had dis little oil stove, and I put da oil in da tank on da back a da oil stove fur in da winter, and every morning I have da carry down dis can a oil. I used be afraid when da children dance, 'fraid deyed beat da oil stove, you know, I used da have da talk to 'em. Now we took da oil stove out, den we built on a piece and put a pool table dere.

When I started I got water from my brother's place because he had a well, and I had da fetch da water right from across da road. So anyway I had dis pump, and was hard fur 'en da pump da water because 'twas sa far away. So I was tormented dat much da last I had da give up da pump. I said I can't do it no more, I got da carry down da water 'cause dis a get on ya nerves. Den da Board of Health moved in, you had da have water. Well, I said, I can't dig nere well here because 'tis not a clean place: dere was a lot a toilets around. So da Board of Health said well you could dig it out dere. So, anyway, dis day dey come dere and dey said go ahead and dig...and den da Town Council moved in too and you had da have permits from dem, you wasn't allowed da do it. [asked if she meant outdoor toilets (as opposed to just outdoor sewerage): yeah dere was still outdoor toilets.] Up here [in her home] we had a well, we got a well dug up here but we didn't

have it down dere see. And dat well used da go dry in da summer, although we had it blasted. So anyway I used da carry da water down. Da Board of Health told me I had da get a barrel, put a tap to it, da taps on me sink, and have a rubber hose from da barrel to da sink and das da way I had da use it, so I done dat. Dey said you got da have toilets, you got da have a chemical toilet. You got da go down every night, he said, let da children use da chemical toilet (or da people, whatever) and take da toilet in da night carry it down and throw it in da water [ocean]. I said, buddy I won't be doin' dat, das one thing I won't be doin'. Oh how much did I fight atall...I said my own sewerage is enough fur me da do, I said I'm not doin' it. Dis day he came dere—and I remembers poor Pop put dis pipe up through da restaurant because we had da have dis toilet dere—now I said I don't mind, I'm usin' da toilet but not fur dat, and I said a lot a people won't be usin' 'en. So, da thing was dere but nobody used it. And he come in dis day and he went in da bathroom, we'll call it, and he said nobody uses it? I said no. What about, he said, I wanted da use it? I said, if you want da use it, I said, I wouldn't let ya. And dere was a toilet, see, outside and I said, do you see dat toilet dere? He said yes. Well, I said, das where I'll make you go, out dere. I said, you tink, I said I'm gonda da dat, I said, after workin' here all day, take sewerage, I said, twelve a clock in da night and carry it down, I said, to da salt water. No, buddy, I said, I'm not doin' dat. I said, let 'em go home and use da toilets, I said, or go outside. One day he came dere—he used be buggin' me all da time—and he was talkin' sa much he got right on me nerves, das da truth. And he said, do you know, he said, I could put a notice in ya window, he said, you'll be closed. **Yes, I said, you can do dat, put da notice in da window, I said, and close me, I said, and I said, go to da welfare and I said place my cheque I said every month I said dere on my counter. I'll sit down, I said, like a lot a people done. I said I don't have da work, I could sit down. But my husband took sick, I said, I could sit down too, I said da welfare coulda fed me, like dey fed so many else, but I said I was willin' da work, and he looked at me, you know, he knew I was right.** ... 'Cause maid I useda work dat hard sometimes I'd cry, 'cause when I come up here 'twas not like I could lock me door, leave me dishes on da table, leave me bed not made up, and leave things, do it when I could, it had be done, I had da have it done. I couldn't go away and leave my dishes in da sink and Clem in dere sick, doctors and whoever comin' in...and another ting didn't know when I had da take 'en in da hospital, 'cause Clem used da be da sick sometimes I used da leave 'en and he was not fit da leave. ... 'Cause he used da be in bed and I used da be feedin' 'en, dere's nobody knows what I used da go through, and den I'd be workin'; I useda work meself down dere. I'd go down two a clock in da evening, I'd be down dere when da long liners be goin' out I'd be comin' home, two a clock in da morning.

**Appendix G: Responses about Diapering**

- R 19- She used cloth diapers for all of her babies. She explained that she would put flour on the stove (in a container of some sort) and brown it for use as a powder to rub onto the baby's bottom.
- R 17- She used cloth diapers that she made herself.
- R 6- Used all cloth diapers.
- R 15- She used cloth diapers for all seven babies and said "I almost scrubbed me hands off scrubbin' diapers, tryin' da get 'em clean. Different, now dey got pampers da throw away."
- R 9- She used cloth diapers made of flannel, and said she used rubber/plastic pants to wear over the diapers "fur goin' anywhere." She mentioned everyone using pampers now and said she thought that this is a waste "off and in da garbage" and said people should use some diapers and that it's "nice to put 'em on da line." [This is certainly environmentally friendly, and not as time consuming as when she used them considering that many households now have automatic washers and dryers.]
- R 8- Used cloth diapers for all children.
- R 5- "Always had da cloth diapers."
- R 11- "And dere was no pampers when I was raisin' my children, all diapers."
- R 2- Used all cloth diapers, no pampers. "Hadda wash 'em out and dry 'em for the next day."
- R 3- "Dere was no such thing as goin' out and buyin a tin a some kind ointment da put on a baby's bum, you had da get some flour and put into a cover of a can and put it on da stove and brown it like and use dat."
- R 20- She also used cloth diapers for all fifteen babies! "Oh my dears, I saw enough a dem."

- R 12- Used cloth diapers for all three babies; pampers still not available when last born in 1961, as far as she knew.

- R 4- "No pampers, none fur (my second child) and none fur (the first)."

- R 18- Cloth diapers for all three babies.

- R 10- She washed clothes "on a washin' board, with seven youngsters" and she used cloth diapers for all twelve babies.

- R 14- She used all cloth diapers and said of pampers: "I wouldn't put dat on a baby." She said that pampers were "too hard" (ie rough).

- R 13- "...and Javex, das fur da stains in diapers we used da put sunlight soap on dem and scrub dem and pour boiling water on each stain. Dere was no pampers."

### Appendix H: Increase in Unemployment Insurance Rates, 1950 to 1960

#### Weekly Rates of Contribution and Benefit under the Unemployment Insurance Act (Effective July 1, 1950)

Range of Earnings	Weekly Contributions		Rates of Benefit			
	Em- ployer	Em- ployed Person	Person Without Dependant		Person With a Dependant	
			Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly
While Earning in a Week—	cts.	cts.	\$	\$	\$	\$
Less than \$ 9.00.....	18	18	0.70	4.20	0.80	4.80
\$ 9.00 to \$14.00.....	24	24	1.00	6.00	1.25	7.50
\$15.00 to \$20.99.....	30	30	1.35	8.10	1.70	10.20
\$21.00 to \$26.99.....	36	36	1.70	10.20	2.15	12.90
\$27.00 to \$33.99.....	42	42	2.05	12.30	2.60	15.90
\$34.00 to \$47.99.....	48	48	2.40	14.40	3.05	18.30
\$48.00 or more.....	54	54	2.70	16.20	3.50	21.00

Source: Reproduced from the Official Handbook of Present Conditions and Recent Progress (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1951), p. 230.

#### Rates of Contribution and Benefit under the Unemployment Insurance Act (Effective July 14, 1952)

Range of Earnings	Weekly Contributions		Rates of Benefit			
	Em- ployer	Em- ployed Person	Person Without a Dependant		Person With a Dependant	
			Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly
While Earning in a Week—	cts.	cts.	\$	\$	\$	\$
Less than \$ 9.00.....	18	18	0.70	4.20	0.80	4.80
\$ 9.00 to \$14.99.....	24	24	1.00	6.00	1.25	7.50
\$15.00 to \$20.99.....	30	30	1.45	8.70	2.00	12.00
\$21.00 to \$26.99.....	36	36	1.80	10.80	2.50	15.00
\$27.00 to \$33.99.....	42	42	2.15	12.90	3.00	18.00
\$34.00 to \$47.99.....	48	48	2.50	15.00	3.50	21.00
\$48.00 or more.....	54	54	2.85	17.10	4.00	24.00

Source: Reproduced from the Official Handbook of Present Conditions and Recent Progress (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1953), p. 239.

**Rates of Contribution and Benefit under the Unemployment Insurance Act  
(Effective Oct. 2, 1955)**

Range of Earnings	Weekly Contributions		Employee's Average Weekly Contribution	Weekly Benefit	
	Employer	Employee		Without Dependant	With Dependant
	cts.	cts.	cts.	\$	\$
While Earning in a Week— Less than \$9.00.....	08	08			
\$ 9.00 and under \$15.00..	16	16	Less than 20.....	6.00	8.00
\$15.00 and under \$21.00..	24	24	20 and under 27..	9.00	12.00
\$21.00 and under \$27.00..	30	30	27 and under 33..	11.00	15.00
\$27.00 and under \$33.00..	36	36	33 and under 39..	13.00	18.00
\$33.00 and under \$39.00..	42	42	39 and under 45..	15.00	21.00
\$39.00 and under \$45.00..	48	48	45 and under 50..	17.00	24.00
\$45.00 and under \$51.00..	52	52	50 and under 54..	19.00	26.00
\$51.00 and under \$57.00..	56	56	54 and under 58..	21.00	28.00
\$57.00 and over.....	60	60	58 to 60.....	23.00	30.00

Source: Reproduced from the Official Handbook of Present Conditions and Recent Progress (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1956), p. 111.

**Rates of Contribution and Benefit under the Unemployment Insurance Act  
(Effective Sept. 27, 1959)**

Range of Earnings	Weekly Contributions		Employee's Average Weekly Contribution	Weekly Benefit	
	Employer	Employee		Without Dependant	With Dependant
	cts.	cts.	cts.	\$	\$
While Earning in a Week— Less than \$9.00.....	10	10			
\$ 9.00 and under \$15.00..	20	20	Less than 25.....	6.00	8.00
\$15.00 and under \$21.00..	30	30	25 and under 34..	9.00	12.00
\$21.00 and under \$27.00..	38	38	34 and under 42..	11.00	15.00
\$27.00 and under \$33.00..	46	46	42 and under 50..	13.00	18.00
\$33.00 and under \$39.00..	54	54	50 and under 57..	15.00	21.00
\$39.00 and under \$45.00..	60	60	57 and under 63..	17.00	24.00
\$45.00 and under \$51.00..	66	66	63 and under 69..	19.00	26.00
\$51.00 and under \$57.00..	72	72	69 and under 75..	21.00	28.00
\$57.00 and under \$63.00..	78	78	75 and under 82..	23.00	30.00
\$63.00 and under \$69.00..	86	86	82 and under 90..	25.00	33.00
\$69.00 and over.....	94	94	90 and over.....	27.00	36.00

Source: Reproduced from the Official Handbook of Present Conditions and Recent Progress (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1960), p. 159.





