

"AN AGENCY FOR THE COMMON WEAL":  
THE NEWFOUNDLAND BOARD OF TRADE, 1909-1915

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"AN AGENCY FOR THE COMMON WEAL": THE NEWFOUNDLAND  
BOARD OF TRADE, 1909-1915

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the origins and early history of the Newfoundland Board of Trade and its role in the development of fisheries policy during the period 1909 to 1915, a period relatively unexplored by historians. Bridging a significant gap in the historiography, the thesis offers some insight into the controversial questions associated with government and merchant involvement in fisheries development, or the lack of it, during the critical period prior to World War I. This examination demonstrates that, contrary to the standard interpretation, the mercantile membership of the Board of Trade was genuinely concerned with the problems of a deteriorating fishery and responded to the difficulties by seeking an active role in the development of government policies. As a parallel movement to the Fishermen's Protective Union, which formed in direct response to the fishery crisis of 1907-08, the Board advanced a series of extensive reforms and initiated a number of practical strategies to ameliorate the worsening conditions related to standardization, production, markets, and shipping of Newfoundland's dominant export commodity.

As well, the thesis examines the administration of Sir Edward Morris and its policies on the fisheries. It is argued that the government's failure to institute widespread fishery reforms was not so much a reflection of inertia or disinclination, but rather the result of

extenuating economic, structural, and organizational constraints that limited its ability to effectively reform the fishery.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study has benefited from the close scrutiny of my supervisor, Jim Hiller. Jim's concern for this particular project has saved what otherwise would have been a waste of time and effort. His interest in many aspects of this rather enigmatic period of Newfoundland's history made the end result a much better product. Words of gratitude go to Bill Reeves for so generously giving of his time to discuss ideas and peruse an earlier draft. My thanks also extend to Rosemary Ommer, who planted the seeds of this project many years ago in History 1001, and who has since generously provided employment and given of her precious time and wise council. I would also like to thank the staff of the Public Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador for their assistance. My greatest appreciation, however, goes to Miriam Wright whose gentle spirit in the face of very trying times made the situation all the more bearable. It's rather doubtful whether the thesis would have been completed without her help. Miriam also gave generously of her time to photocopy various materials from the Centre for Newfoundland Studies and used her graduate privileges to borrow reels of microfilm so that I could pore over the relevant newspapers at home.

This project was completed without any funding. I am, however, extremely grateful for the earlier funding that I received from Memorial University. My economic circumstances during the last few years were made

all the more difficult with the sudden death of my father in May 1996. The unanticipated funeral expenses, the lack of any insurance, and the mounting bills following my father's death seriously impeded the idea of even completing this particular study. Adding to the difficulties was the crash of my computer two days following his burial. This did not help the situation. It took some six months to afford the parts for a working computer and begin the research anew. My thanks also go to Bernard Delurey for putting all the component parts of a working computer together. Without his generous assistance, completing this thesis would have been impossible.

## PREFACE

This study began rather modestly as a term paper for Dr. Shannon Ryan's graduate seminar in Newfoundland History during the Winter of 1990. At that time I was attempting to flesh out material for a substantially larger study of Newfoundland's business elite during the first decade of the twentieth century. As little had been written on the Newfoundland Board of Trade, it seemed appropriate from the perspective of the larger study to attempt to understand something about the Board's origins, membership and concerns. Additionally, the study might help to resolve several glaring discontinuities within the literature.

As an undergraduate, my initial readings of Ian McDonald's seminal work on William F. Coaker and the Fishermen's Protective Union<sup>1</sup> had not suggested that anything was amiss in his interpretation. But as I began to think about the period as I served my apprenticeship in the academy, I became less certain about the logic of some of his explanations. A closer reading seemed to suggest that the Board often supported the Union's calls for reform of the fishery.<sup>2</sup> This seemed incongruous. If class divisions within Newfoundland were so polarized, surely the Board and its merchant constituency would have opposed the FPU. Curiously, although McDonald made extensive use of the annual reports, correspondence, letter books and

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<sup>1</sup>Ian D.H. McDonald, "To Each His Own": William F. Coaker and the Fishermen's Protective Union in Newfoundland Politics, 1908-1925. Edited by James K. Hiller. (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, MUN, 1987).

<sup>2</sup>See for example, McDonald, "To Each His Own", chapter 1, footnotes 17, 24, 26, 28, 30-33, 35, 39, 40, and 45.

minutes of the Board of Trade to explain the problems of the Newfoundland fishery, nowhere in the course of his narrative does he reveal the Board's origins, or why it would have been so concerned with fishery matters. However, I did not have an answer in reply.

Harold Innis also seemed to suggest that the Board was intimately concerned with the progress and conduct of the fishery during the period.<sup>3</sup> But again, Innis did not elaborate on the history of the Board or why it might have been so concerned. Something was clearly wrong with McDonald's interpretation and I began to wonder if there might not have been a wider social debate on the subject of fisheries reform that had somehow been overlooked in the literature? Were Newfoundland's merchants and politicians as neglectful of their responsibilities as conventional wisdom would have it? As well, the 1937 Report of the Commission of Enquiry Investigating the Seafisheries,<sup>4</sup> seemed to indicate a more vigorous government role in the fisheries during the pre-World War I period:

In 1909 experiments were conducted in the shipments of fresh fish by what was known as the "Solling" method, which provided for the enclosing of fresh fish in a particular type and form of paper, the whole being packed in broken ice. The experiment does not appear to have proved commercially successful. In the same year, the Government had under consideration schemes for the creation of Cold Storage plants throughout the country, and in 1910 a contract was made with

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<sup>3</sup>Harold A. Innis, The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy. Revised Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), chapter 14, footnotes 19, 24, 27, 29, 31, 41, 43, 53, 56, 59, 63, 65, 71 and 73.

<sup>4</sup>Report of the Commission of Enquiry Investigating the Seafisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador other than the Seafishery, 1937. (St. John's: Dick's & Co., 1937).

Messrs. Trefethan and Lord, of Portland, Maine, for the erection of five Cold Storage plants around the coast, each plant to have a storage capacity of one million pounds of frozen fish. This contract was not carried out.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, the Report did not provide an answer to why government would have fostered these projects, or how they came to fail. Still, I wondered whether these projects were part of a much broader government strategy on the fishery?

William Reeves' work on the period from 1898-1910<sup>6</sup> corroborated my long-held suspicions of a much wider participation in ventures to modernize the Newfoundland fisheries by revealing that many Newfoundland leaders actively encouraged the modernization of the fishery.<sup>7</sup> At that point, however, I was unwilling and ill-equipped to venture into the development debate; Reeves' interpretation remained but an interesting aspect within the historiography.

Later, as I scrambled for a second topic to fulfil the requirements of the Masters programme, I settled on the idea of conducting a much more intensive study of the Board of Trade. Jim Hiller suggested that the focus of the study might best be served by concentrating on one aspect of

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<sup>5</sup>Commission of Enquiry, 1937, 24.

<sup>6</sup>William G. Reeves, "Our Yankee Cousins': Modernization and the Newfoundland-American Relationship, 1898-1910." (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Maine at Orono, 1987); "Alexander's Conundrum Reconsidered: The American Dimension in Newfoundland Resource Development, 1898-1910," Newfoundland Studies 5, 1 (Spring 1989), 1-37; and "Aping the 'American Type': The Politics of Development in Newfoundland, 1900-1908," Newfoundland Studies 10, 1 (Spring 1994), 44-72.

<sup>7</sup>See Reeves, "Our Yankee Cousins," Chapter 6, 279-333.

the Board's activities, fisheries development. Still I was apprehensive about entering the controversial frays of the development debate fearing that my interpretation could well be claimed as "special pleading." However, as I meandered through a morass of correspondence, minute books, newspapers, and government documents, the more I became convinced of the validity of my previous suspicions concerning past interpretations. And while this study may well come to be interpreted as special pleading on my part, I am nonetheless convinced of the accuracy of my discoveries; this, despite my previously-held assumptions.

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## Chapter I - Introduction

Newfoundland's historiography has been particularly weak with regard to elucidating the nature and role of its merchant class within the historical process. While knowledge of the various regimes, factions and personalities who occupied positions of power has been well-established, the intimate connections between the political arena and Newfoundland board rooms have not been thoroughly explored. As a result, little is known about the extent of mercantile involvement in the economy, or about the power and influence merchants wielded behind the veneer of politics over a broad range of Newfoundland's history.

To date, only Kenneth Kerr and John Joy have attempted to explore the inter-connected realms of politics and business.<sup>1</sup> Kerr's work details the religious and occupational backgrounds of members of the House of Assembly, and the Legislative and Executive councils during the period 1855-1914. His broad conclusions, however, provide far too many generalisations to perceive specific individuals in the mix. Of greater relevance is John Joy's examination of the growth of various St. John's industries during the period 1870-1914. This work establishes some of the connections that existed between various companies, businessmen and shareholders. While exceedingly valuable for pointing out a range of

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Kerr, "A Social Analysis of the Members of the Newfoundland House of Assembly, Executive Council, and Legislative Council for the Period, 1855-1914." (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1973); and John Lawrence Joy, "The Growth and Development of Trades and Manufacturing in St. John's, 1870-1914." (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977).

inter-business connections, Joy's thesis provides only a tantalizing glimpse into the structure of corporate power. More particularly, little is known about the merchants themselves, either as individual actors or as members in a hierarchy of indigenous business and social organizations. This significant gap in the historiography has given rise to a great deal of confusion, suspicion and misunderstanding within the literature about the possible degree of influence Newfoundland's merchants wielded in the affairs of state. This has been especially so with regard to interpreting Newfoundland's failure to adapt to the changing needs of an evolving economy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Newfoundland popular culture, as well, has played a part by perpetuating an unfavourable image of a merchant class wholly at odds with both the fishers and the working-class. At times, the culturally-accepted image of an entrenched mercantile elite (and by association all Newfoundland merchants), has become a convenient scapegoat on which to attach the sins and ills of Newfoundland's sorry economic past. Commonly perceived over time as a monolithically conservative institution, "Water Street" has generally been scorned as either self-serving, parasitic, secretive, myopic, or simply indifferent to the fate of the Newfoundland economy and its people--altogether exploitative in both deed and word.<sup>2</sup> Crudely deterministic, this all-pervasive myth presents an unflattering

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<sup>2</sup>Gordon F.N. Fearn, "The Commercial Elite and Development in Newfoundland." (Unpublished paper delivered to the Newfoundland Historical Society, 30 March 1976).

portrait of greed, neglect, and failed economic vision and to some extent has tended to explain the reasons for Newfoundland's failure to adapt to a changing world. Such ahistorical stereotypes, however, tend only to obscure the historical debate by denying the semblance of active human agency.

Newfoundland's failure to reform its fisheries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is claimed to have been intimately linked to the central role that Newfoundland's merchants played as economic and political decision makers.<sup>3</sup> David Alexander, in particular, levelled a charge of neglect against Newfoundland's merchants for their failure to make substantive reforms in the fishery during the first two decades of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> The merchants, it is alleged, turned their backs

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<sup>3</sup>Shannon Ryan, Fish Out of Water: The Newfoundland Saltfish Trade, 1814-1914. (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1986), 68-9; Eric Sager, "The Merchants of Water Street and Capital Investment in Newfoundland's Traditional Economy," in Lewis R. Fischer and Eric W. Sager, eds., The Enterprising Canadians: Entrepreneurs and Economic Development in Eastern Canada, 1820 - 1914. (St. John's: Maritime History Group, MUN, 1979), 92-3; and Lawrence F. Felt, "On the Backs of Fish: Newfoundland and Iceland's Experiences with Fishery-Induced Capital Goods Production in the Twentieth Century," in Peter R. Sinclair, ed., A Question of Survival: The Fisheries and Newfoundland Society. (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, MUN, 1988), 51-6. For a review of the historical literature, see Eric Sager, "Dependency, Underdevelopment, and the Economic History of the Atlantic Provinces," Acadiensis XVII, 1 (Autumn 1987), 117-37.

<sup>4</sup>David Alexander, "Development and Dependence in Newfoundland, 1880-1970," in Eric W. Sager, Lewis R. Fischer, and Stuart O. Pierson, compilers, Atlantic Canada and Confederation: Essays in Canadian Political Economy. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 3-31; and "Newfoundland's Traditional Economy and Development to 1934," in James Hiller and Peter Neary, eds., Newfoundland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Essays in Interpretation. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 17-39.

on the fishery in favour of interior landward development, while Newfoundland's government increasingly courted foreign investment in a further attempt to spur economic development through a strategy of export-led growth. With the conclusion of the First World War, Newfoundland found itself ill-equipped to compete against her foreign rivals and her once proud market dominance in fish products disappeared.<sup>5</sup>

But were Newfoundland's merchants wholly at fault in their stewardship of the fishery? Alexander's interpretation is somewhat problematic on this point. On the one hand, he harshly condemns the merchants for their seeming neglect of the fisheries, yet promotes the impression that the root cause of Newfoundland's inability to solve the problems of catching, processing, and marketing was perhaps more attributable to a "weakness in entrepreneurship and capital supply."<sup>6</sup> The first concept, however, does not necessarily equate with the other; neglect would advance the idea that a deliberate course was followed, while a deficiency of vision and a lack of investment capital suggests that cultural and structural factors were impediments to economic action. Perhaps "neglect" is too strong a word to explain such a complex phenomena. Unfortunately, Alexander was unable to delve more deeply into the complex character of Newfoundland entrepreneurship and its

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<sup>5</sup>See Ryan, Fish Out of Water, especially Chapter 3, 76-98.

<sup>6</sup>Alexander, "Development and Dependence," 15.

relationship to the Newfoundland economy.<sup>7</sup>

The publication of Gerald Sider's Culture and Class in Anthropology and History<sup>8</sup> offered historians an opportunity to rethink their assumptions regarding merchant exploitation. Rosemary Ommer, building upon her understanding of the Jersey-Gaspé cod fishery,<sup>9</sup> launched several community studies of Newfoundland merchant firms,<sup>10</sup> and examined the place

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<sup>7</sup>David Alexander, "Some Introductory Thoughts on Entrepreneurship," in Fischer and Sager, eds., The Enterprising Canadians, 1-4.

<sup>8</sup>Gerald M. Sider, Culture and Class in Anthropology and History: A Newfoundland Illustration. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). See also Jerry Bannister, "'A Species of Vassalage': The Issue of Class in the Writing of Newfoundland History," Acadiensis XXIV, 1 (Autumn 1994), 134-44. For a critical review of Sider, see J.K. Hiller, Peter Narváez and Daniel Vickers, "Newfoundland's Past as Marxist Illustration," Newfoundland Studies 3, 2 (Fall 1987), 265-76; and F.L. Jackson, "The Marxist Mystification of Newfoundland History," Newfoundland Studies 6, 2 (Fall 1990), 267-81.

<sup>9</sup>Rosemary E. Ommer, From Outpost to Outport: A Structural Analysis of the Jersey-Gaspé Cod Fishery, 1767-1886. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

<sup>10</sup>See Rosemary E. Ommer, "Merchant Credit and the Informal Economy: Newfoundland, 1919-1929," Communications historiques/Historical Papers (1989), 167-89; Rosemary E. Ommer, with Robert Hong, "The Newfoundland Fisheries: the Crisis Years, 1914-1937," paper presented to the Atlantic Canada Studies Conference, Orono, Maine, May 1990; Rosemary E. Ommer and Robert C.H. Sweeny, "Which Ties Bound Who to Whom? Lessons learned from computerizing merchant ledgers for Bonavista Bay, Newfoundland, 1889-1891," paper presented to the Australia and New Zealand Conference on Canadian Studies, Wellington, New Zealand, December 1992. See also Robert C.H. Sweeny, with David Bradley and Robert Hong, "Movement, Options and Costs: Indexes as Historical Evidence, a Newfoundland Example," Acadiensis XXII, 1 (Autumn 1992), 111-21; and Robert C.H. Sweeny, "Accounting For Change: Understanding Merchant Credit Strategies in Outport Newfoundland," in James E. Candow and Carol Corbin, eds., How Deep Is the Ocean?: Historical Essays on Canada's Atlantic Fishery. (Sydney: University of Cape Breton Press, 1997), 121-38.

of Newfoundland's fishery within the larger Canadian economic context.<sup>11</sup> Overall, Ommer's tone has moderated in favour of a more balanced approach to the questions related to household production and alleged merchant exploitation. No longer are Newfoundland's merchants solely to blame for the sins of the past; they also faced economic handicaps. Speaking specifically of the 1890s, Ommer suggests that merchants:

...were also under stress. Negative balances had traditionally been carried over by merchant firms, which had needed to hold on to their fishers. This was the famous "tie that bound" the fisher to the merchant through bonds of indebtedness. However, by 1890 the merchant was tied to the fisher rather than vice versa, not only because many fishers had accounts with more than one merchant and hence could hardly be said to be "tied", but also because the merchants were getting caught in a liquidity squeeze. Firms' creditors were seeking payment in the end-of-century recession, but much of the necessary capital was tied up in debtor-client accounts.<sup>12</sup>

Sean Cadigan, as well, has moderated his views on the character of Newfoundland merchant capital by rejecting the simplistic argument of blaming greedy merchants for the failure to develop the colonial economy. Focusing upon an earlier period in Newfoundland's past (1785-1855), Cadigan contends that the fish merchants have become the "chimera" of Newfoundland history, which "supposedly inhibited Newfoundland development through truck, prohibited agriculture, and manipulated wage and credit

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<sup>11</sup>Rosemary E. Ommer, "One Hundred Years of Fishery Crises in Newfoundland," *Acadiensis* XXIII, 2 (Spring 1994), 5-20; and "What's Wrong with Canadian Fish?" in Sinclair, ed., *A Question of Survival*, 23-44.

<sup>12</sup>Ommer, "One Hundred Years of Fishery Crises in Newfoundland," 8.

law.<sup>13</sup> Newfoundland's truck system (or credit system), was not "imposed by the venality and avarice of merchants," but rather arose as a complex adaptation to Newfoundland's limited resources.<sup>14</sup> Despite the above studies, many gaps remain in our understanding of the vagaries of mercantile trade and the deleterious effects of the credit system on both Newfoundland's people and its economy.<sup>15</sup> In the absence of solid empirical research into the specific activities, investments, deeds, and motivations of Newfoundland's merchant class, the inclination has been simply to assume a high degree of merchant culpability for the lack of fishery reform. This, however, may be tantamount to blaming the victim, especially for the murky and little understood period from 1910-1915.

The reasons why so few reforms were made in the fisheries prior to 1914 have not been sufficiently explored. Ian McDonald, the authority on William F. Coaker and the Fishermen's Protective Union (FPU),<sup>16</sup> would

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<sup>13</sup>Sean T. Cadigan, Hope and Deception in Conception Bay: Merchant-Settler Relations in Newfoundland, 1785-1855. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), vii-viii.

<sup>14</sup>Cadigan, Hope and Deception, viii.

<sup>15</sup>James K. Hiller, "The Newfoundland Credit System: An Interpretation," in Rosemary E. Ommer, ed., Merchant Credit and Labour Strategies in Historical Perspective. (Fredericton, NB: Acadiensis Press, 1990), 86-101.

<sup>16</sup>Ian D.H. McDonald, "To Each His Own": William F. Coaker and the Fishermen's Protective Union in Newfoundland Politics, 1908-1925. James K. Hiller, ed. (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, MUN, 1987); and Ian McDonald, "W.F. Coaker and the Balance of Power Strategy: The Fishermen's Protective Union in Newfoundland Politics," in Hiller and Neary, eds., Newfoundland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 148-180.

suggest that Newfoundland's merchant class and politicians of the day opposed reform for their own neglectful and selfish reasons. While the FPU offered a radical departure from the past and an alternative vision for Newfoundland's fisheries,<sup>17</sup> it is often insinuated that the FPU was the solitary voice of reason in a sea of abject neglect. But were Newfoundland's elites as blind and indifferent to the problems of the fishery as conventional wisdom suggests? Curiously, the merchant viewpoint is conspicuously absent in the standard historical narratives.

According to William Reeves,<sup>18</sup> David Alexander simply may have "overestimated the maneuvering space and development options open to colonial leaders."<sup>19</sup> Reeves, through a meticulous reconstruction of the interconnected relationship between Newfoundland and the United States during the period 1898-1910, demonstrates that many Newfoundland leaders actively encouraged the modernization of the fishery.<sup>20</sup> It was not a period of wholesale merchant neglect of the fishery as the standard

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<sup>17</sup>S.J.R. Noel, Politics in Newfoundland. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 77-94. See as well, McDonald, "To Each His Own", 24-5; and "W.F. Coaker and the Balance of Power Strategy," 157.

<sup>18</sup>William G. Reeves, "'Our Yankee Cousins': Modernization and the Newfoundland-American Relationship, 1898-1910." (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Maine at Orono, 1987); "Alexander's Conundrum Reconsidered: The American Dimension in Newfoundland Resource Development, 1898-1910," Newfoundland Studies 5, 1 (Spring 1989), 1-37; and "Aping the 'American Type': The Politics of Development in Newfoundland, 1900-1908," Newfoundland Studies 10, 1 (Spring 1994), 44-72.

<sup>19</sup>Reeves, "Alexander's Conundrum," 30.

<sup>20</sup>See Reeves, "Our Yankee Cousins," Chapter 6, 279-333.

historiographic explanation would have it:

In the marine resource sector, Newfoundlanders saw a more advanced American fishery which brought home the need for technological and organizational change. Indeed, contrary to the usual perception of inertia in the colonial fishery, many Newfoundlanders--and some outsiders--made strenuous efforts to improve that industry's performance.<sup>21</sup>

The failure to establish long-term development was not due to greed or myopia, but rather derived from Newfoundland's inability to introduce and sustain new technologies. Moreover, given the lack of cohesion amongst members of the merchant community and the minimalist nature of the state's apparatus,<sup>22</sup> neither government nor the merchants were able to exert effective control in the catching, curing and marketing of the products of the fisheries.<sup>23</sup>

Reeves is less sure about the issue of capital availability. While he cites several examples that demonstrate significant merchant investment in the fishery, he is hesitant to state categorically whether capital resources were widely available; he merely suggests that many merchants simply might not have had monies to invest and that more deeply rooted structural problems conditioned the historical experience.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Reeves, "Our Yankee Cousins," 593.

<sup>22</sup>Reeves illustrates the rudimentary nature of the Fisheries Department by citing the Daily News, 5 February 1902, which indicates that apart from the Minister, consisted of "a thoroughly qualified deputy, who is Superintendent of Fisheries; an accountant, a typewriter and messenger." Reeves, "Alexander's Conundrum," 20.

<sup>23</sup>Reeves, "Our Yankee Cousins," 607.

<sup>24</sup>Reeves, "Our Yankee Cousins," 606.

It is entirely possible that the reluctance to invest in the fishery was not so much a fault of merchant vision or inclination, but rather directly related to an inability to reinvest. In an earlier study of Newfoundland's economy, R.A. MacKay also noted that Newfoundland's merchant class might not have had access to substantial accumulations of capital to reinvest in the economy.

Newfoundland capital has largely been built upon merchandising with its subsidiaries, which in turn has been based upon the fishing industry. Although the trade built upon the fishing industry has been substantial, and has provided at times comfortable fortunes for certain individuals and families, it has never been profitable enough to be classed as "big business", or to lead to the accumulation of really large fortunes. There are no "wealthy" individuals in Newfoundland, judged by New York, or London, or even Montreal, standards. While in earlier times fortunes were sometimes accumulated and spent or invested abroad, it may well be doubted whether the total accumulation from the fishery and the mercantile business built thereon has ever been much more than sufficient to finance these activities and subsidiary industries and services.<sup>25</sup>

Anecdotal evidence would also suggest that Newfoundland's merchants could only expect meagre returns from the fishery. John C. Crosbie, a long-serving Newfoundland provincial and federal politician and heir to the Crosbie family's business,<sup>26</sup> suggests that wealth was modest in comparison to other countries, and moreover, was determined by the peculiarities of the saltfish trade: "Whatever wealth there was in

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<sup>25</sup>R.A. MacKay, ed. Newfoundland: Economic, Diplomatic, and Strategic Studies. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1946), 116-17.

<sup>26</sup>For a history of the Crosbie family, see Michael Harris, Rare Ambition: The Crosbies of Newfoundland. (Toronto: Viking/Penguin Books Canada, 1992).

Newfoundland was middle class. No one in Newfoundland in those days amassed great wealth. It was only too easy to lose a lot of money overnight in the fishery.<sup>27</sup>

The 1937 Report of the Commission of Enquiry Investigating the Seafisheries<sup>28</sup> determined that the internal dynamics of Newfoundland's fishery tended to limit the potential for amassing huge profits. Some merchants, it reported, sold their fish to exporters "sometimes at a profit and sometimes at a loss."<sup>29</sup> Overall, the lack of credit, a shortage of cash, and a general liquidity squeeze tended to constrain all of the participants in the fishery:

The fisherman wants his outfit at the commencement of the season on credit; the Outport merchant requires credit from the larger merchants, and the latter in many cases, require credit from the Banks. The exporter, or fish buyer, has to use the facilities of Banking institutions for the purpose of the sale of the fish.<sup>30</sup>

The Commission's examination of exporters' books determined that little profit was made from the fishery during the years from 1927 to 1935. The information showed conclusively that exporters failed "to make sufficient gross profit on their codfish purchases to cover the average cost of their

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<sup>27</sup>John C. Crosbie with Geoffrey Stevens, No Holds Barred: My Life in Politics. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1997), 9.

<sup>28</sup>Report of the Commission of Enquiry Investigating the Seafisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador other than the Sealfishery, 1937. (St. John's: Dick's & Co., 1937).

<sup>29</sup>Commission of Enquiry, 1937, 116.

<sup>30</sup>Commission of Enquiry, 1937, 128.

codfish labour and direct codfish charges...their average profit was but 38 cents per quintal before providing for any of their overhead expenses."<sup>31</sup> Granted, the Commission's enquiry presented an extreme case, but low returns may have been an historical constant rather than an exception. If meagre returns were all that could be expected from the fishery, it would explain much about the limited nature of investment and the problems that Newfoundland's merchants faced in the conduct of their businesses. However, the merits of this explanation are not easily resolved and remain open to diverse interpretation.<sup>32</sup>

But what then of the period immediately following Reeves' study? Could there also have been a wider societal debate over the future of the fisheries that has somehow been absent from the historical literature? Recent work by Keith Hewitt indicates that a modicum of progress was achieved in the fisheries by 1914 and that government was active in the promotion of cold storage facilities, the encouragement of new markets, and the establishment of foreign market trade agents.<sup>33</sup> Government, however, stopped short of full-scale intervention. Quick to fault the government for its failure to reform the fisheries, Hewitt argues that a

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<sup>31</sup>Commission of Enquiry, 1937, 139.

<sup>32</sup>See for example, Eric Sager, "The Merchants of Water Street," 75-95.

<sup>33</sup>Keith Hewitt, "Exploring Uncharted Waters: Government's Role in the Development of Newfoundland's Cod, Lobster and Herring Fisheries, 1888-1913." (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1992), 165-80, 206-14.

more successful fisheries policy should have placed a greater emphasis upon cooperation with the various participants in the industry (fishers, merchants and exporters), and also should have augmented the role of the Department of Marine and Fisheries in the formulation and execution of policy.<sup>34</sup> Hewitt, however, does not elaborate on the probable organizational and financial constraints that government would have faced in the execution of this policy.

But was government wholly at fault in its failure to initiate widespread fisheries reform? Perhaps historians have been overly critical in their overall assessment of the government. Apart from Reeves, there is little discussion of the possible economic, structural, or organizational constraints. Newfoundland's small colonial government simply did not have the financial nor technical resources, to resolve the problems in the fishery; perhaps the problems were too large for government to tackle. This converse argument would view government's failure to institute widespread fishery reforms as not so much a reflection of inertia or disinclination, but rather the consequences of extenuating economic and structural factors. Instead of viewing the actions of Sir Edward Morris' administration during this period negatively (as so often has been the case), perhaps its moderate attempts to stimulate the fishery should be viewed more positively. Morris' promotion

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<sup>34</sup>Hewitt, "Exploring Unchartered Waters," 189-90.

of alternative fish products and his preoccupation with the development of a system of cold storage facilities to both stimulate fresh fish markets and control the problems of over-production may have been attempts to achieve an immediate measure of reform in the fishery with the few resources his government had at its disposal. A longer term solution to the complex question of standards would necessarily have to wait. As the Morris government deliberated on the question of reform, its ability to manoeuvre decreased as the events of August 1914 approached. Timing, in this instance was especially important. By 1915, and the presentation of the "Report of the Commission on Fishery Matters,"<sup>35</sup> the question of instituting an extensive series of reforms became less likely. Despite the value of the report's recommendations, little improvement in the fishery occurred over the next five years; the coming of the war and soaring fish prices due to wartime shortages, circumvented any meaningful attempts at reform. And while deep concerns remained over the backward nature of the traditional fishery, by the close of the war it had become

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<sup>35</sup>"Report of the Commission on Fishery Matters appointed by His Excellency the Governor," Journal of the House of Assembly, 1915, 384-94. The 13-member commission consisted of members of both the House of Assembly and Legislative Council, along with some of Newfoundland's more prominent merchants. Appointed on 13 March 1914, the commission consisted of John Harris, John Harvey, William C. Job, Marmaduke G. Winter, A.F. Goodridge, Philip Templeman, Patrick T. McGrath, James Ryan, Edward P. Morris, Archibald W. Piccott, Michael P. Cashin, Robert Moulton, and Albert E. Hickman. The contents and recommendations of the Report have been curiously absent in the development debate. This has been a glaring oversight as the report demonstrates that government, contrary to the standard historical interpretation, was willing to attempt to solve the problems of the fishery in the period immediately prior to 1915.

far too late to attempt to solve the structural problems and crisis ensued for the interwar period.

An examination of the Newfoundland Board of Trade (which was formed in 1909 and contained many of Newfoundland's leading merchants and traders), may offer some insight into the major questions associated with government and merchant involvement in fisheries development, or the lack of it, during the critical period prior to World War I. This examination will demonstrate that the mercantile membership of the Newfoundland Board of Trade was not only genuinely concerned with the problems of a deteriorating fishery, but responded to the difficulties by seeking an active role in the development of government policies, while at the same time promoting practical measures to modernize the fisheries. As with the Fishermen's Protective Union, which also formed in direct response to the fishery crisis of 1907-08, the Board advanced a series of extensive reforms and initiated a number of practical strategies to ameliorate the worsening conditions related to standardization, production, markets, and shipping. While perhaps less radical than the FPU's approach, the Board's solutions nonetheless mirrored the concerns of many, both inside and outside the trade, for a fundamental departure from the traditionalism of the past.

Other than a few passing references in the standard histories of

Newfoundland,<sup>36</sup> the history of the Newfoundland Board of Trade remains substantially unexplored.<sup>37</sup> As little has come to be known about its origins, membership, or even its concerns, it has been viewed simply as a conservative merchant organization that opposed for opposition's sake. For example, when cited in the literature, the Board is often portrayed as the sum total of an unchanging membership; no allowance is accorded to the fact that the membership of the Board comprised individual merchants and traders (each with discrete concerns), or that its leadership, especially the presidency changed annually.<sup>38</sup> (See Appendix 1: Councils of the Newfoundland Board of Trade, 1909-1917.<sup>39</sup>) Moreover, there has been a

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<sup>36</sup>In addition to previously cited articles see David Alexander, The Decay of Trade: An Economic History of the Newfoundland Saltfish Trade, 1935-1965. (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1977). See also Harold A. Innis, The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy. Revised Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), especially Chapter 14, 449-483.

<sup>37</sup>Apart from a superficial essay by H.T. Renouf outlining some of its more illustrious activities, no systematic study has been conducted on the Board of Trade. See H.T. Renouf, "The Newfoundland Board of Trade," in Joseph R. Smallwood, ed., The Book of Newfoundland, Volume 2. (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937), 207-8.

<sup>38</sup>During the period 1910-1919, ten different individuals occupied the position of President of the Newfoundland Board of Trade; Marmaduke G. Winter (1910); William C. Job (1911); George C. Fearn (1912); William G. Gosling (1913); John S. Munn (1914); Walter S. Monroe (1915); Robert B. Job (1916); Walter B. Grieve (1917); Robert G. Winter (1918); and James J. McKay (1919).

<sup>39</sup>The list was compiled from various sources including Daily News, and Newfoundland Board of Trade Minute Books: Minute Book, March 1909 - October 1910; and Minute Book, November 1910 - March 1914. Newfoundland Board of Trade, Public Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL), MG73, Box #71.

great deal of misunderstanding as to its concerns. This has been especially so with regard to Ian McDonald's work on William F. Coaker and the FPU. Although McDonald made extensive use of the annual reports, correspondence, letter books and minutes of the Board of Trade to reveal the problems of the Newfoundland fishery, nowhere does he explain why the Board would have been so concerned with fishery matters. It is a curious omission that leads to the conclusion that neither the government nor the Board of Trade, and by association its merchant constituency, were concerned with the worsening state of the fishery or that they played any positive role in the debate over fisheries reform prior to 1914.

An examination of the Newfoundland Board of Trade would be deficient without an additional focus upon the actions of the government of Sir Edward P. Morris and the economy under which his government operated. In a sense, the early history of the Board is also the history of government policy in relation to the fisheries, for it was ultimately the government that the Board hoped to influence. If in the end, little long-term change resulted from the Board's efforts, it was not for want of trying. As well, the positive nature of the economy from 1909 onwards must be considered as a major factor in forestalling immediate government action. As may have been the case with Reeves' earlier period,<sup>40</sup> radical reforms

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<sup>40</sup>Reeves has suggested that improved prices in the early 1900's and perceived landward opportunities made the pressure for change in the fishery less urgent. Reeves, "Our Yankee Cousins," 607.

may have become less urgent in a steadily improving economy and the advent of rising fish prices. Perhaps, if the low fish prices generated from the downturn of 1907-08 had continued, the outcome might well have been different; but the fishery--despite its many deficiencies--appeared brighter in the years that followed, while the Newfoundland economy enjoyed a rare bout with prosperity. As with its Canadian counterpart, Newfoundland appeared to have been on the verge of claiming the 20th twentieth century as its own.

Chapter II - Citizen Gosling and the Fruition of an Idea

By the turn of the 20th century Newfoundland's once great fishery was losing ground in the European markets. The deterioration in standards of cure, over-production and periodic catch failures, foreign competition, rivalry among its domestic fish exporters, and an unstable and unregulated system of exporting had resulted in the lowering of the value of Newfoundland's saltfish exports. And while many merchants and fishers suffered the market consequences, few had any easy solutions to offer to overcome the host of problems that plagued the fishery.

It has been generally assumed that fish prices declined during the first decade of the 20th century and that this expedited the formation of the Fishermen's Protective Union in November 1908.<sup>1</sup> While fish prices did decline during the 1907-08 season, overall the period witnessed an improvement of fish prices. The impact of falling and rising fish prices is critical for an understanding of the history of the period as both increased and lessened the sense of urgency on the need for fishery reform.

Generally, fish prices improved during the 24 year period from 1896 to 1919. For the five-year period from 1896-1900, fish prices averaged

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<sup>1</sup>Ian D.H. McDonald, "To Each His Own": William F. Coaker and the Fishermen's Protective Union in Newfoundland Politics, 1908-1925. James K. Hiller, ed. (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, MUN, 1987), 14.

\$3.15 per quintal (Table 2.1). During the 1901-1906 period, fish prices increased by an average of 39%. This was followed by an average increase of 15% during 1906-1910. The next five-year period, 1911-1915, saw an additional 20% increase. From 1916-1920 fish prices boomed at an average price of \$10.60 per quintal, a 76% increase over the previous five-year period. At the end of the war, however, fish prices began to fall rapidly.

Of the twenty years from 1896 to 1915, only five saw a decrease in price from the previous year (1897, 1903, 1908, 1909 and 1913). Of these, only 1908 and 1909 saw consecutive price decreases, involving an overall drop in average price of 22.8% from 1907. The negative impact of these two specific years on those who made their living from the fishery was undeniable: something had to be done to halt the drop in prices. In 1910, however, fish prices recovered, and continued to rise for an unprecedented ten years. The price slump of 1908 and 1909 forced fishers, merchants, and the government to consider taking action to halt the downward trend. On the other hand, rising prices from 1910 onwards, could explain why radical reform of the fisheries became less urgent.

The deplorable state of the fishery reached crisis proportions during the 1907-08 exporting season.<sup>2</sup> During 1907, an above average catch and a rush to an already congested European market, precipitated a

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<sup>2</sup> See McDonald, "To Each His Own," 7-14; and Shannon Ryan, Fish Out of Water: The Newfoundland Saltfish Trade, 1814-1914. (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1986), 40-75.

Table 2.1: Dry Codfish Exports for Years ending 30 June, 1896-1925

Year	Exports (Qtls)	Value (\$)	Avg. Price per Quintal (\$)	Five Year Avg. Price/Quintal (\$)
1896	1,436,083	4,297,699	2.99	
1897	1,312,088	2,824,242	2.15	
1898	1,145,540	3,230,928	2.82	3.15
1899	1,226,336	4,445,031	3.62	
1900	1,300,622	5,453,538	4.19	
1901	1,233,107	5,171,910	4.19	
1902	1,278,955	5,509,728	4.31	
1903	1,429,274	5,663,072	3.96	4.39
1904	1,360,373	5,943,063	4.37	
1905	1,196,814	6,108,618	5.10	
1906	1,481,025	7,864,719	5.31	
1907	1,422,445	7,873,172	5.53	
1908	1,509,269	7,820,092	5.18	5.03
1909	1,732,387	7,398,536	4.27	
1910	1,502,269	7,307,378	4.86	
1911	1,182,720	6,544,604	5.53	
1912	1,388,178	8,001,703	5.76	
1913	1,408,582	7,987,389	5.67	6.03
1914	1,247,314	8,071,889	6.47	
1915	1,094,242	7,332,287	6.70	
1916	1,421,327	10,394,041	7.31	
1917	1,568,020	12,876,847	8.21	
1918	1,821,206	18,829,560	10.34	10.60
1919	1,681,770	24,316,830	14.46	
1920	1,788,015	22,671,625	12.68	
1921	1,363,792	13,334,954	9.78	
1922	1,592,046	11,695,668	7.35	
1923	1,483,087	10,135,318	6.83	7.93
1924	1,264,674	8,483,735	6.71	
1925	1,165,097	10,445,617	8.97	

(Source: Newfoundland Customs Returns, 1897-1926)

considerable fall in the price of all grades of Newfoundland salt fish.<sup>3</sup> It was an intolerable situation for both fishers and merchant exporters. For both William Coaker and William Gilbert Gosling--class opposites--the solution to the problems of the fisheries were obvious. For Coaker, the solution to Newfoundland's social and economic woes in general and to the fishery crisis in particular was to unite its dispersed fishers, loggers and sealers under the all-encompassing banner of a union that could both offer a commercial alternative to the merchants and speak to their concerns in the House of Assembly.<sup>4</sup> Disillusioned with both Sir Robert Bond and Sir Edward Morris (both of whom Coaker had supported in previous elections) Coaker, along with 18 others, formally established the Fishermen's Protective Union at Herring Neck, Notre Dame Bay, during two meetings on 2-3 November 1908.<sup>5</sup>

William G. Gosling,<sup>6</sup> as well, considered combination as the solution

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<sup>3</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries, 1908." Journal of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland, 1909. (St. John's: The Evening Chronicle, 1909), 228.

<sup>4</sup>S.J.R. Noel, Politics in Newfoundland. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 77-94.

<sup>5</sup>Coincidentally, 2 November 1908 was polling day. "Journal of Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the Supreme Council of the Fishermen's Protective Union, held in the S.U.F. Hall at Change Islands, October 29th, November 1st, 2nd and 3rd, 1909," in Hon. Sir W.F. Coaker, ed., Twenty Years of the Fishermen's Protective Union of Newfoundland. (Reprint) (St. John's: Creative Printers and Publishers Limited, 1984), 1, 189.

<sup>6</sup>In addition to his public life, Gosling was an active member of the Newfoundland Historical Society and wrote two local histories; The History of Labrador (1910), and The Life of Sir Humphrey Gilbert (1911).

to the current fishery crisis. But Gosling wanted an alliance of merchants and fish exporters. Gosling had come to Newfoundland in June 1881 from Bermuda to work as a clerk with Harvey and Company. Active in civic matters, he was the honorary secretary of a fundraising committee for the rebuilding of the Anglican Cathedral following the 1892 fire, and was instrumental in the formation of the Association for the Prevention of Consumption (tuberculosis) in 1908. As a long-time booster of the idea of a unified trade board to guide the colony's economy,<sup>7</sup> Gosling was deeply troubled by the deplorable state of the industry in his adopted homeland. He set out his ideas for reform in three letters to the Evening Telegram. Essentially, Gosling advocated the formation of a board of trade to establish and maintain foreign market agents, seek out new markets,

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Following the formation of the Newfoundland Board of Trade, he was elected its President (1913-1914) and in the same year became a Director of Harvey & Co. During his tenure as President of the Board of Trade, he organized a civic reform movement and was subsequently appointed Chairman of the Municipal Board of St. John's (1914-1916). As Chairman, he drafted the Charter under which St. John's became a municipality and later was elected its Mayor (1916-1919). Returning to Bermuda for health reasons in 1928 he died two years later in 1930. Following his death, his wife, the former Armine Nutting, donated his personal library to the people of St. John's to form the nucleus of the Gosling Memorial Library, which opened in 1936. Melvin Baker, "William Gilbert Gosling," Newfoundland Quarterly LXXXI, 1 (July 1985), 43; and "William Gosling and the Charter: St. John's Municipal Politics, 1914-1921," Newfoundland Quarterly LXXXI, 1 (July 1985), 21-8; Albert B. Perlin, The Story of Newfoundland. (Second Printing) (St. John's: Guardian Limited, 1959), 70, 160; Dictionary of Newfoundland and Labrador Biography. (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications, Ltd., 1990), 129; and R. Hibbs, ed., Who's Who in and from Newfoundland, 1927. (St. John's, R. Hibbs, 1927), 207.

<sup>7</sup>William G. Reeves, "Alexander's Conundrum Reconsidered: The American Dimension in Newfoundland Resource Development, 1898-1910," Newfoundland Studies 5, 1 (Spring 1989), 20.

regulate shipments, investigate new fishery methods, establish a standardized cure, and conduct scientific research into the fisheries.

In his first letter, published 30 November 1908 (barely a month after the formation of the FPU), Gosling lamented the heavy losses of the 1907-08 fishery and attempted to establish the background to the current crisis. Citing Governor Sir William MacGregor's Report on the Trade and Commerce of Newfoundland,<sup>8</sup> he noted that while there had been a good margin of profit on shipments in the years previous to the 1906-07 season, Newfoundland's fish exporters had lost approximately 30¢ per quintal, totalling some \$500,000 during 1907-08. He calculated that prices for all saltfish cures had dropped by 35% to 40% from 1906-07 to 1907-08. In particular, the price for large and medium Merchantable fish had declined by 29% from \$6.50 to \$4.60, while large and medium Maderia dropped by 34%, from \$5.50 to \$3.60, and Shore Cured Labrador plummeted by 48%, from \$5.25 to \$2.70 a quintal.<sup>9</sup> Elaborating on the causes of the crisis, Gosling referred to the precarious nature of production, the peculiarities of exporting, and the adverse effects on fish prices:

...the weather during the Spring and Summer of 1907 was one of the worst on record. It was impossible to get fish properly cured and dried. The West Coast cargoes were delayed for weeks beyond the time of intended shipment, and the European markets began to clamour for cask fish. The prices offered were most attractive and exporters, thinking that we would

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<sup>8</sup>Governor Sir William MacGregor, Report on the Foreign Trade and Commerce of Newfoundland, for the Four Years ending with 30th June 1906. (London?: Board of Trade?, ca. 1907?).

<sup>9</sup>Evening Telegram, 30 November 1908, 5.

have a normal summer sold ahead to an enormous extent. But the fish was abnormal, and dry fish could not be obtained in time to fill their contracts which had been made. The merchants in their eagerness to fill their contracts bid fish up and up until it reached a most dangerous figure. Fish did not begin to come to market freely until November, and then a great deal of it was very badly cured. After the European demand was satisfied, the merchants found on their hands large quantities of damp and rather inferior fish, having paid high prices for it, they endeavoured to get commensurate prices, and held it at figures which reduced consumption considerably. The result was that when April and May were reached there was still a large quantity of fish which had to be sold, and it was rushed off helter skelter to all markets and sold at any price. The markets were bound to break.<sup>10</sup>

A particularly fine season followed in 1908 with not "a full day's rain," enabling fishermen to fish each day. The fine weather, however, complicated the problems of the year before by producing new fish much earlier than usual. Unfortunately, the new fish was shipped before disposing of the previous year's stocks. As a direct consequence, prices to the fishermen were reduced and a severe cull was imposed by the exporters. With the rush of fish to market during August, September and October, large shipments congested the European markets. Prices fell considerably and both exporters and fishers suffered the consequences.

In his second letter, Gosling elaborated on the advantages of reliable and comprehensive trade statistics and the inability of the Newfoundland trade to acquire a knowledge of Norwegian, Icelandic, and French competition in the fish markets, or get information on the markets themselves. This, to his mind, was "a very serious drawback to us in the

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<sup>10</sup>Evening Telegram, 30 November 1908, 5.

proper management of the business."

We go on shipping there in an absolutely blind way, very few ever knowing what vessels are loading for market at one time. Every now and then it is suddenly discovered that there is an excessive quantity of fish on the way to that market. A condition of things which is unhappily the case at the present moment, and unless some of the intended loadings are held back, that market in short will be in a demoralized condition. A little consultation and forethought would have avoided such an unhappy condition of things.<sup>11</sup>

To further his point, he lamented that little was known even about the waters off the coast of Newfoundland. "Absurd as it seems to say it, we are always in a blissful state of ignorance about the catch of fish in our own waters." Nor was there any information available about the nature and extent of exports. But, he suggested, "all this information can be obtained, if someone were appointed to procure it."

Gosling's answer to the problems of a disorganized trade, excessive competition and the lack of information, was simple. Merchants, he said, must unify to deal with common problems. His third letter of 2 December 1908 revealed his solution:

I think, however, that it is obvious that our fish business is not being conducted in a manner to ensure the best results, and that a great deal may be done to improve the situation. The disadvantages under which the trade is labouring may be classified as lack of harmonious co-operation amongst ourselves, lack of information, and lack of proper representation in our principal markets. I put "LACK OF CO-OPERATION" first because all the rest results from it. We are like the bundle of sticks in the fable, -- combined we would be strong enough to resist attack, but separated, we are broken in turn...In my opinion, the first thing to be done is

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<sup>11</sup>Evening Telegram, 1 December 1908, 3.

to form a comprehensive Board of Trade, including every class of industry and every business man in the city. It should be duly incorporated and be a dignified body able to compel the respect and adherence of its members. Let us form such an Association as will be strong enough to influence Governments and secure such legislation as may be needed.<sup>12</sup>

For Gosling, an influential trade board consisting of the principal fish dealers would help to solve the problems in the fishery by unifying the disparate elements of the trade. Speaking with one voice, the board could then provide the government with critical advice and information on all matters related to the fishery.

Seven weeks following the publication of Gosling's letters, the St. Andrew's Literary Association held a forum on the question of whether a board of trade should be established. Departing from its usual debate format, the Association invited a number of prominent community members to present their views. The main speaker was Henry W. LeMessurier, Assistant Collector and Deputy Minister of Customs, and the Imperial Trade Correspondent in Newfoundland for the Commercial Branch of the Imperial Trade Board.<sup>13</sup> In a lengthy address, LeMessurier delivered a history of the work of the English boards of trade and spoke of their influence and

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<sup>12</sup>Evening Telegram, 2 December 1908, 3.

<sup>13</sup>Henry William LeMessurier (1848-1931), was appointed Justice of the Peace in 1878 and later represented the district of Burin in Robert Thorburn's Reform Party following in the 1885 election. He was defeated in 1889. From 1889-1892 he edited the Evening Herald and in 1894, was appointed to Customs becoming the Assistant Collector in 1897 and Deputy Minister in 1897. In 1909 he became the Imperial Trade Correspondent. Who's Who in Newfoundland, 1927, 236; and Year Book and Almanac of Newfoundland 1910. (St. John's: J.W. Withers, King's Printer, 1910).

responsibilities in the framing of positive trade laws and in the promotion and regulation of trade. In his estimation, a broadly-based board representing the various aspects of Newfoundland's trade could similarly speak with a unified voice. Unlike the former St. John's Chamber of Commerce, which ceased operations sometime in 1894,<sup>14</sup> a trade board would assist local business, and be an essential first step towards standardizing production in the fishery:

In dealing with many questions in relation to the codfishery, the Government feels it is weak and asks one or another of the merchants for information. Do they receive an unbiased opinion in reply? If there was a Board of Trade that could be consulted, the opinion of the majority of its members would be received, and, in many cases, would prove of great value....This is where a Board of Trade would show its usefulness, as the members would be competent to draw up a scale, regarding length, salting, etc....the Chamber of Commerce, which was formed wholly of fish exporters, which came to an end at the time of the Crash. This wasn't a Board of Trade, because such a body should be formed of men interested in business of every kind, who could discuss questions arising in connection with every branch of trade,

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<sup>14</sup>Little of a comprehensive nature is known about the St. John's Chamber of Commerce. Judge Prowse indicates that it was founded on 26 December 1823, and it appears to have suspended its activities some time in 1894. D.W. Prowse, A History of Newfoundland from the English, Colonial and Foreign Records. Facsimile edition (Belleville, ON: Mika Studio, 1972), 393. C.R. Fay published a number of articles on its early history in the Newfoundland Journal of Commerce, XX, 5 (May 1953, 16-22; XX, 6 (June 1953), 7-11; and XX, 7 (July 1953), 16-20. The Colonial Commerce featured a rough history of the organization over the course of several issues during 1917 and 1918. Unfortunately, a complete series of the periodical is not extant. See "How from Merchants' Society to Chamber of Commerce the Present Board of Trade of To-day Evolved," in Colonial Commerce, 26, 7 (30 June 1917), 17-23; 27,2 (31 January 1918), 25-8; and 27, 5 (30 April 1918), 17-9. Shannon Ryan details some of its activities but does not elaborate on its history or function. See Fish Out of Water, 23-4, 43, 48-9, 68, 116, 120, 131-2, 144-5, 154-6, 168, 174-5, and 212.

such as prices, exports, etc.<sup>15</sup>

Following LeMessurier, George C. Fearn<sup>16</sup> spoke to the gathering. Outlining some of the difficulties associated with the duties levied on fish exports, shipping, and problems with the neglectful packaging of salmon and lobsters, Fearn suggested that those difficulties could be remedied by the establishment of a board of trade. Following Fearn, Capt. Linklater, P.R. McLeod, F.B. Wood and the chairman, James J. McKay spoke. At the close of the meeting, all "were of the unanimous opinion that a local Board of Trade should be established."<sup>17</sup>

The idea of establishing a local trade board also appealed to Edward Morris. Morris, the member for St. John's West, had previously held the position of Minister of Justice in Sir Robert Bond's Liberal administration from 1902-07. Splitting from Bond in 1907, Morris and the Conservative opposition formed the People's Party to contest the November 1908 election.<sup>18</sup> The election resulted in a tie, which set the stage for

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<sup>15</sup>Daily News, 20 January 1909, 5.

<sup>16</sup>Little is known about Fearn's life. He may have been George C. Fearn (proprietor of George C. Fearn & Son and the Liberal member for St. Barbe in the Whiteway administration of 1889), or he may have been his son. His influence on the initial formation and the early years of the Newfoundland Board of Trade was immense. From 1909-1911 he served in the key position of Secretary-Treasurer and became the Board's President in 1912. Following his tenure as President he served two terms as a Board Councillor in 1913 and 1914.

<sup>17</sup>Daily News, 20 January 1909, 5.

<sup>18</sup>Following the 1909 election victory, the People's Party became the government and Morris the country's Prime Minister. Who's Who in Newfoundland, 1927, 60-1; and Dictionary of Biography, 233-5.

a six-month constitutional crisis. Eventually, Morris won out and was granted a dissolution on 16 April 1909. An election followed on 8 May 1909--a contest that saw Bond's Liberals reduced to eight seats and Morris' People's Party winning twenty-six seats.<sup>19</sup>

In the midst of the political maneuvering leading up to the dissolution and the 8 May election, Morris, on 13 March 1909, invited a number of prominent St. John's merchants and politicians to the Executive Council Chamber at the Court House to discuss the formation of a board of trade.<sup>20</sup> Morris indicated that his invitation was not motivated by politics, but rather was driven by the current condition of the fishing industry and the need to find remedies for the "evils existing" in the trade.<sup>21</sup> Speaking at some length, Morris pointed out the many problems in the fishery and suggested several solutions to improve existing conditions and establish new markets for innovative fish products. New fish markets could be developed in South and Central America, South Africa

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<sup>19</sup>Noel, Politics in Newfoundland, 75-6.

<sup>20</sup>Present at the meeting were: Sir Edward P. Morris, Hon. John Harvey, R.B. Job, M.G. Winter, P. Templeman, A. McDougall, J. Tobin, W.F. Horwood, E.J. Horwood, F. McNamara, G.H. Dickenson, W.A. Munn, S. Munn, A. Goodridge, J.W. Clouston, D. Baird, R.G. Rendell, R.A. Templeton, G.C. Fearn, W.G. Pippy, F. Smallwood, Jesse Whiteway, F.W. Knight, John Syme, C.H.G. Tessier, J.H. Monroe, W.S. Monroe, W.G. Gosling, Tasker Cook, W.H. Davidson, L. Parker, S.E. Garland, J.J. Murphy, J.R. Bennett, H.W. LeMessurier, J.J. Mullally, and T.A. Pippy among others. Daily News, 15 March 1909, 4.

<sup>21</sup>"Minute Book, March 1909 - October 1910." Newfoundland Board of Trade, Public Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL), MG73, Box #71, (5/A1,80), 1. (Hereafter cited as "Board of Trade Minute Book #1.")

and the United States while new methods of fish production could be introduced. To maintain quality a standardized cull of fish should be adopted. Cold storage facilities could also be developed on the island and improved transportation facilities could lessen shipping time to overseas markets. A non-partisan Board of Trade which would coordinate these activities and advise the government was, in Morris' view, essential for the future prosperity of Newfoundland. "The success of such an enterprise as we are now launching," he stated categorically, "depends entirely in a union of all parties and all interests in the public good." The establishment of a Board of Trade, in his opinion, might provide some of the solutions to the chaos of the situation:

When these matters are to be considered, when a policy in relation to new methods and new markets, the cull of fish, and the adoption and application of cold storage in relation to certain branches of the codfishery; legislation in reference to the fisheries, industrial development, a policy of encouraging manufactures in the Colony, who is the Government to go to, to advise with, and learn what ought to be done? In other countries the Governments are advised by Boards of Trade or other similar institutions, and in that way harmony exists, not alone as regards the manner in which these large industries are encouraged, but the laws which affect them and protect them, are nearly in all cases the outcome of the advice of these bodies.<sup>22</sup>

Subsequent speeches by George C. Fearn, William G. Gosling, and William A. Munn,<sup>23</sup> supported Morris' proposal. Gosling summed up the

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<sup>22</sup>Daily News, 15 March 1909, 4.

<sup>23</sup>William Archibald Munn (1864-1940), son of Robert S. Munn of Harbour Grace, began his business career in Montreal with his uncle, Stewart Munn. In 1895, he had returned to Newfoundland and started his own business as an importer and wholesaler of flour and provisions. In 1911 he organized

general mood of the meeting by noting that:

It has been apparent to me for a long time that the jealousy and suspicion among the trade has been most harmful to it, and I think there is no means of getting out of it better than by getting together, forming a Board of Trade and discussing measures for the benefit of the general good, and not so much for the individual....I am of the opinion that the good, old-fashioned way of curing and preparing fish is going to remain for a long time, and that the first thing we have to do is to improve the cull and the markets.<sup>24</sup>

Following comments by such notable merchants as Robert B. Job<sup>25</sup> and Philip Templeman<sup>26</sup>, the meeting unanimously resolved that a committee of 15 be

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the Newfoundland Marine Insurance Co. and was its Managing Director until his death in 1940. Munn was also a pioneer in the manufacturing of cod liver oil. He also was an active member of the Newfoundland Historical Society and published a number of local histories, including a history of Harbour Grace. Who's Who in Newfoundland, 1927, 183-4; and Dictionary of Biography, 239-40.

<sup>24</sup>Daily News, 15 March 1909, 5.

<sup>25</sup>Robert Brown Job (1873-1961), son of Thomas Raffles Job and brother of William Carson Job, came to Newfoundland in 1897 to work in the family fish business, becoming the general manager in 1916. By the late-twenties, he was the President of Job Brothers & Co., Ltd., Job's Seafishery Co., Ltd., Job's Stores, Ltd., The Exploits Valley Royal Stores, Ltd., and Vice-President of G. Browning & Son, Ltd., and Royal Stores, Ltd. In 1913 and 1914 he was elected as a Councillor of the Newfoundland Board of Trade, and in 1915 became the 1st Vice-President. The following year he was elected its President. In 1928 he was appointed to the Legislative Council. Who's Who in Newfoundland, 1927, 177; and Dictionary of Biography, 254.

<sup>26</sup>Philip Templeman (1860-1926), established a general merchant and fish exporting business in Bonavista following the purchase of James Saint's premises in 1887. He served one term as a Board of Trade Councillor in 1912 and in 1913 was appointed to the Legislative Council along with Augustus F. Goodridge and James Ryan. Dictionary of Biography, 335. For an examination of Templeman's business during the interwar years, see Rosemary E. Ommer, "Merchant Credit and the Informal Economy: Newfoundland, 1919-1929," Communications historiques/Historical Papers (1989), 167-89; and Rosemary E. Ommer, with Robert Hong, "The Newfoundland Fisheries: the Crisis Years, 1914-1937," paper presented to the Atlantic

appointed to consider the formation of a trade board.<sup>27</sup>

Although the establishment of a trade board was not directly referred to in either Morris' 1908 manifesto<sup>28</sup> or the expanded 1909 manifesto, such an innovation might have been seen as a convenient and an inexpensive way for Morris to facilitate implementation of the fishery planks in the People's Party platform. These included the creation of new markets, subsidies for direct steam transport to the West Indies, cold storage for fishery exports, establishment of bait freezers, expansion of the herring fishery, and the prohibition of steamers in the Labrador fishery.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, given the recent fall of fish prices and the failure of the Bond administration to initiate practical solutions to the tough problems of the fishery, the idea of establishing a trade board would have been a convenient way for Morris to show the electorate that he, unlike Bond, stood for action. While Morris may have stated that his reasons for convening the meeting were not motivated by politics, the fact that he acted in the context of the constitutional crisis is significant.

During the weeks that followed, the fifteen committee members-- William G. Gosling, George C. Fearn, Robert B. Job, Philip Templeman,

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Canada Studies Conference, Orono, Maine, May 1990.

<sup>27</sup>Daily News, 15 March 1909, 5.

<sup>28</sup>Daily News, 7 October 1908, 7; and 8 October 1908, 4.

<sup>29</sup>Daily News, 12 April 1909, 3.

William A. Munn, Hon. John Harris,<sup>30</sup> Hon. Robert K. Bishop,<sup>31</sup> Hon. John C. Crosbie,<sup>32</sup> Marmaduke G. Winter,<sup>33</sup> Walter S. Monroe,<sup>34</sup> John W.

<sup>30</sup>John Harris (1860-1915) began his business career with James Gleeson's hardware firm in 1875 and in 1877 was employed as a bookkeeper with Hearn and Company, Commission Merchants. In 1890 he was appointed as the government's representative on the St. John's Municipal Council resigning in 1892 when he was appointed to the Legislative Council. In 1912, with the retirement of Edward D. Shea, Harris became the President of the Legislative Council, a post he held until his death three years later. Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador, Volume 2. (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Limited, 1985), 843.

<sup>31</sup>Robert K. Bishop (1853-1930) began his business career with Bishop Brothers, Ltd. of Burin. By 1890 he was associated with Moses Monroe in a general import and export business which was later to become a partnership, Bishop and Monroe Co. In 1908 he gained control of the company and from 1909 to 1922 his firm operated as Bishop, Sons and Company Ltd. He was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1899 and held the post until his death in 1930. Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador, Volume 1. (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Limited, 1981), 197.

<sup>32</sup>John C. Crosbie (1876-1932) began his business career in 1895 with the re-establishment of the Crosbie Hotel and as Manager of the Newfoundland Produce Company, a fish-oil and by-product exporter. By 1900, Crosbie had established the first local large-scale fish-exporting business in Newfoundland, Crosbie and Company and in 1925 established the Newfoundland Butter Company. In 1909 he was elected the member for Bay de Verde in the Morris administration and served as a member of the Executive Council (without portfolio) from 1909-1917. From January 1918 until November 1919 he was Minister of Shipping and in 1919 was elected as the member for Port de Grave. In 1924, he was appointed to the position of Minister of Finance and Customs in the Walter S. Monroe administration, a post which he held until he retired from politics in 1928. Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador, Volume 1, 563.

<sup>33</sup>Marmaduke George Winter (1857-1936), brother of James Spearman Winter, Premier of Newfoundland (1896-1900), established T. & M. Winter with his brother Thomas in 1879. By 1898 he had become principal in the firm and in 1903 became president of Standard Manufacturing. Winter was also associated with a number of Newfoundland firms, including, Consolidated Iron Foundry, Brehm Manufacturing, Newfoundland Marine Insurance Company, F.B. Wood Co., Ltd., Phoenix Whaling Company, and Job's Sealfishery. Following his election as the Newfoundland Board of Trade's first President in 1909, he was appointed to the Legislative Council in

Withers<sup>35</sup>, William F. Horwood<sup>36</sup>, R. Goodridge, J.H. Monroe, and R.G. Rendell--held a number of meetings to work out the terms of reference of the Board and draft a set of governing by-laws for inclusion in an act of incorporation.<sup>37</sup> On 5 June 1909, the committee presented the draft legislation to an attentive meeting at the Court House. Delivering the report, Gosling indicated that despite the Committee's application to obtain wider powers to regulate the fishery, the Board "could not be constituted on the broader lines which foreign countries had adopted."<sup>38</sup> Morris had turned down sections 10 to 16 of the draft act and refused to grant the Board wide regulatory powers; in his view these were outside the

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1910 by Sir Edward Morris. Who's Who in Newfoundland, 1927, 250; and Dictionary of Biography, 366-7.

<sup>34</sup>Walter Stanley Monroe (1871-1952), came to Newfoundland in 1888 to work with his uncle, Moses Monroe. In 1896, he formed a partnership with Robert K. Bishop under the title Bishop & Monroe. In 1909 he established the Monroe Export Company. By the late-twenties he was President of the Imperial Tobacco Company and the Newfoundland Wholesale Dry Goods Company, Ltd., and a Director of the Colonial Company. In 1924 Monroe was elected to the House of Assembly and became Prime Minister. Who's Who in Newfoundland, 1927, 65-66; and Dictionary of Biography, 226-7.

<sup>35</sup>John W. Withers (1843?-1921), son of John C. Withers was the first clerk (deputy minister) in the Colonial Secretary's office before succeeding his father as the King's Printer.

<sup>36</sup>William Frederick Horwood (1856-1927), began a sawmill operation at Clarke's Beach and with his brother, Reuben F. Horwood, secured control of the Campbell Lumber Company to become the Horwood Lumber Co. in 1902. Under his leadership the company established mills at Dog Bay (Horwood) in 1902 and Campbellton in 1904. A pulp mill was established at Campbellton in 1912, but was abandoned in 1916. Dictionary of Biography, 163.

<sup>37</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 8-15.

<sup>38</sup>Daily News, 7 June 1909, 6.

Board's mandate.<sup>39</sup> As Morris elaborated in a letter to Gosling, the proposed sections:

...are in my opinion too far reaching: they propose to give to the Board of Trade powers which I think are unprecedented, at least in analogous cases. In a country like Newfoundland, where the great mass of our people have really no say in the marketing of their produce or the price they are to obtain for the same, it would never do, in my humble judgement, to hand over to any board or body in the country the powers here asked for. The Board of Trade can do a great deal in its recommendations from time to time to the Government of the day in relation to the laws which should govern and regulate the creation of standards, the appointment of cullers and inspectors, and the handling of our produce generally, as detailed in the sections referred to by me, but to hand over the power of legislation in relation to these matters to a Board is, I think, an advance in legislation for which the country is not yet ripe.<sup>40</sup>

Even without the sections, Morris believed the Board possessed "sufficient powers to accomplish great things for the Colony, and will cover at least for some considerable time, all that is now desired."<sup>41</sup> It is not known if Morris had any ulterior motives in restricting the Board's proposed regulatory activities. It could be argued that he was simply reluctant to extend powers to an unaccountable extra-parliamentary body; ultimate power to regulate the fishery should necessarily remain in the hands of the

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<sup>39</sup>The contents of the proposed regulatory powers outlined in Sections 10 to 16 are unknown. However, the draft probably had requested powers to create and regulate standards in fish cures, the power to appoint cullers and inspectors under the Board's control, and the authority to establish procedures for the handling of produce.

<sup>40</sup>Morris to Gosling, 22 May 1909. Newfoundland Board of Trade Correspondence, PANL, MG73, Box #1, file 6.

<sup>41</sup>Morris to Gosling, 22 May 1909. Newfoundland Board of Trade Correspondence, PANL, MG73, Box #1, file 6.

legislature. It certainly would not have been in his interest to grant power to anyone outside government; giving power to a potential foe simply would have weakened his authority. As well, given the rather turbulent relations between Newfoundland's merchants and fishers, Morris may have been attempting to steer a delicate path through a potential minefield.

It has been argued that the government should have strengthened the Department of Marine and Fisheries to allow it to play a greater role in the formulation and implementation of its fishery policies.<sup>42</sup> This, however, would have required a substantial reorganization of the department in both status and personnel. Its expansion would not only have represented a fundamental departure from government's role in the economy, but would also have entailed additional costs. This, and a general reluctance to fully intervene in the fishery, may have forced government to reconsider expanding the department's role and why it looked to a trade board as a solution. It was an inexpensive alternative to the expansion of the department and could well have provided valuable information leading to the formulation of future government fisheries policies. Economic factors, as well, may have played a part to dissuade government from an expansion of the department. With the recovery of fish prices in 1910, the need for urgent action may have lessened. Despite

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<sup>42</sup>Reeves, "Alexander's Conundrum," 20; and Keith Hewitt, "Exploring Uncharted Waters: Government's Role in the Development of Newfoundland's Cod, Lobster and Herring Fisheries, 1888-1913." (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1992), 189-90.

legislation allowing for the appointment of a Deputy Minister in 1910,<sup>43</sup> there was little expansion of the department's duties during this period.<sup>44</sup> Burdened with the responsibility for all aspects of both marine operations and fisheries policy, it remained a small, nominally staffed department with few resources to devote to the collection of information or devising strategies for the fisheries.<sup>45</sup> Significantly, since the department was not represented in the Executive Council, its influence on Cabinet decisions remained minimal.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>"An Act to amend Chapter 3, of 61 Victoria, entitled 'An Act respecting the Department of Marine and Fisheries.'" 10 Edward VII, Cap. 27. Acts of the General Assembly of Newfoundland, 1910, 121.

<sup>44</sup>Reeves, "Alexander's Conundrum," 20.

<sup>45</sup>Its core fisheries staff consisted of eleven; of these, only the Minister, the Superintendent of Fisheries, Secretary, Accountant, and a Stenographer/Typist had any real responsibility for matters related to the fisheries. The remaining staff, which included a Storekeeper, Inspector of Lighthouses, Clerk to the Inspector of Lighthouses, Lighthouse Mechanician, Inspector of Boilers, and a Messenger were responsible for marine operations. By 1909-10, the Department included, the Minister (Archibald W. Piccott); Superintendent of Fisheries (A.C. Goodridge); Secretary (D.W. Prowse); Accountant (H.V. Hutchings); Stenographer/Typist (Thomas Devine); Storekeeper (H. Gosse); Inspector of Lighthouses (R. White); Clerk to the Inspector of Lighthouses (W. Rogerson); Lighthouse Mechanician (T. Cornick); Inspector of Boilers (A. McLachlan); and Messenger (Leo Cobbett). In 1911, Miss I.I. Calpin was added as the Stenographer/Typist, while Thomas Devine became its Second Clerk and D.M. McFarlane became a second Inspector of Boilers. See various editions of the Year Book and Almanac of Newfoundland. (St. John's: J.W. Withers, King's Printer, 1910-1916).

<sup>46</sup>Morris' March 1909-July 1917 cabinet consisted of the Prime Minister, Edward P. Morris, Donald Morison, Minister of Justice, Robert Watson, Colonial Secretary, Michael P. Cashin, Minister of Finance and Customs, Sydney D. Blandford, Minister of Agriculture and Mines, and Ministers without Portfolios, Charles H. Emerson, Robert K. Bishop, John C. Crosbie, and Michael P. Gibbs. Both the Minister of Public Works, William Woodford and Archibald W. Piccott, Minister of Marine and

Despite restrictions on its regulatory powers, many remained confident that the Board could still fulfil a useful role in the trade and commerce of the country.<sup>47</sup> Gosling, while privately admitting to his wife [Armine Nutting Gosling] that "it looked as though everything vital would be eliminated from it [the Act of Incorporation],"<sup>48</sup> nonetheless expressed his hope that every businessman in the colony would become a member of the Board (at a fee of \$10 per annum). He wanted a membership roll that included every important businessman in Newfoundland and would number in the vicinity of 500. Gosling also announced that negotiations were in progress to secure suitable rooms in the newly-constructed Gazette Building.<sup>49</sup>

On 1 June 1909, the Legislature opened with Governor Sir William MacGregor's Speech from the Throne. Responding to the dismal failure of

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Fisheries were outside the cabinet. J.R. Bennett replaced Robert Watson as colonial secretary and Richard Squires replaced Donald Morison as minister of justice and attorney general in November 1913. Noel, Politics in Newfoundland, 289-90.

<sup>47</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 5 June 1909 meeting, 16-9.

<sup>48</sup>Armine Nutting Gosling, William Gilbert Gosling: A Tribute. (New York: n.p., 1935), 54.

<sup>49</sup>Daily News, 7 June 1909, 6. See also Evening Telegram, 7 June 1909, 6. The Board initially held its meetings in the Executive Council Chamber at the Court House, but eventually concluded an agreement with J.W. Withers, King's Printer, to rent a suite of rooms in the Gazette Building for the sum of \$1,000.00 per annum. Board of Trade Minute Book #1, 19 August 1909 meeting, 42. For the official opening of the trade rooms, see Evening Telegram, 25 October 1909, 5.

the recent fishery, the Morris government advocated establishment of a trade board as part of its plan for positive change:

...there is a general agreement amongst all interested in securing the best returns from the annual prosecution by our people of this industry that the time is arrived when co-operation between the Government of the Colony and those who handle and market the produce of our people should be brought about, with a view to improving the cure, establishing a standard and equitable cull, introducing modern and improved methods of preparing and exporting the fish, opening up new markets encouraging the establishment of direct communication with those countries to which our fish might profitably be exported, applying the principles of cold storage now so generally adopted in other countries, and otherwise devising means by which the best results may be obtained by our people for the fruits of their toil.<sup>50</sup>

In reply to the Throne Speech, John Harris, speaking in the Legislative Council, remarked that the time had arrived for co-operation between government and the trade to ensure stable codfish prices and to relieve the present uncertainty in marketing. "The proposed Board of Trade, if formed, ought to be a great help in bringing about this result."<sup>51</sup>

Two days later, Morris introduced the Newfoundland Board of Trade bill in the House of Assembly. The Board would represent every industry on the Island and the government "would be able to obtain information from a source which should be able to speak with authority in relation to all

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<sup>50</sup>Daily News, 2 June 1909, 7.

<sup>51</sup>Proceedings of the Legislative Council, 1909, 193-4; Daily News, 3 June 1909, 3. See also Daily News, 15 June 1909, 5 for Harris' comments on second reading in the Legislative Council. Harris was one of the members of the committee appointed to draft the proposed legislation.

fishing, industrial and commercial matters that must come up for legislation from time to time."<sup>52</sup> Speaking at length at the bill's second reading on 4 June 1909, Morris informed the House of the benefits which would accrue from the formation of such a body, especially in light of the government's inability to obtain reliable information upon a variety of fishery matters:

To-day if we want to bring in any legislation in relation to the cull of fish, in relation to the cure of fish, or in relation to the marketing of fish, or our trade in the foreign markets; if we wanted to know something about the mesh of a trap, the size of a lobster to be canned, we have no official body in Newfoundland to whom he can go for information. We have nowhere to go for information...We have no Board of Trade, no commercial body, no statistics, no information, no researches or any official data on these important matters, and "Nero fiddles while Rome burns." ...but if we had a Board of Trade that could speak with authority it would tell us whether this was an important matter or not. Here was one of the advantages that might come from a Board of Trade. Then the Board of Trade could advise us about the cull of fish. Some tell us that buying talqual destroys all incentive for the proper curing of the fish. What advantage was there in properly curing fish, if the man with bad, slimy fish could realize as much as the man with good, hard, well-cured fish. We wanted advice on that point.<sup>53</sup>

Following Morris' address, James M. Kent, acting Leader of the Opposition in Bond's absence, spoke. Commenting upon trade in general and the problems of the fishery in particular, Kent said it gave him "much pleasure" to support the bill and hoped the Board "would have the effect

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<sup>52</sup>Daily News, 12 June 1909, 6.

<sup>53</sup>Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 1909, 74; Daily News, 12 June 1909, 6.

of bringing our trade in touch with all improved methods and that a more mutual knowledge of trade and its condition that would result to all our people from the operations of this body."<sup>54</sup> Following Kent, Robert Moulton, Joseph F. Downey, and James A. Clift offered strong support for formation of the Board.<sup>55</sup> Richard J. Devereaux, member for Placentia and St. Mary's, saw great potential in the Board's voluntary work. Perhaps in a year or two, he predicted, the Board's rules and regulations would "be so effective as to make it [codfish] an article of much greater value to the fishermen themselves, to the merchant who buys it here and a much better article of food to the men who bought it on the other side."<sup>56</sup>

Speaking in debate on 7 June 1909, James A. Clift, one of three Liberal members for Twillingate, was pleased to see the formation the Board, and praised Morris for his efforts to bring it about:

A political tinge would most certainly be detrimental to the future usefulness of the Board, and while it might appear that it was baptised in political waters, I hope that in the future it would be looked upon as a Board of Trade composed of persons not influenced by party politics. I am pleased to notice that all shades of politics were represented in the list of those persons whose names were to be incorporated in the Bill and he was confident that the House might rest assured that in the future operations of the Board party politics would play no part. Once party politics entered into

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<sup>54</sup>Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 1909, 78-9; Daily News, 12 June 1909, 6.

<sup>55</sup>Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 1909, 78-81; Daily News, 12 June 1909, 6; Daily News, 16 June, 6.

<sup>56</sup>Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 1909, 83; Daily News, 12 June 1909, 6.

it, its usefulness, to a large extent, would be destroyed.<sup>57</sup>

Judge D.W. Prowse, Secretary of Fisheries Board and a long-time booster of the fisheries, strongly supported the establishment of the board. Prowse emphatically observed that the establishment of the board would be a step in the right direction and "one hopes that our merchants and traders will cordially unite and work harmoniously together in the promotion of this most desirable object."<sup>58</sup> J.E. Ray, Trade Commissioner for Canada, also felt that a trade board was long overdue and pledged the full support of his office. In a letter to Gosling, which was forwarded to the Daily News for publication, Ray remarked that:

The absence of a recognized association in which the multifarious interests of the commercial men were centred, impressed me on my arrival here as inimical to the advancement of the commerce of your Colony...I cannot help feeling that the export trade of your Colony has probably suffered in the past by the non-existence of an authoritative body, to whom such enquiries could be sent.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 1909, 105; Daily News, 16 June 1909, 6.

<sup>58</sup>Letter to Editor from D.W. Prowse, Evening Telegram, 4 June 1909, 5. Judge Prowse, in the months to follow, would contribute several extensive commentaries on the dire need for fishery reform and the advantages that would no doubt derive from the Board of Trade. See "Fish and Fish Markets," Evening Telegram, 27 July 1909, 5; "The Resources of Newfoundland - Markets for Fish," Evening Telegram, 24 September 1909, 3; "Fresh Fish and the Fulton Market," Evening Telegram, 1 November 1909, 7; "Fresh Fish and Foreign Markets," Evening Telegram, 29 November 1909, 6; "Fresh Fish and Foreign Markets," Evening Telegram, 30 November 1909, 5; and "Fresh Fish and Foreign Markets," Evening Telegram, 4 December 1909, 3.

<sup>59</sup>Daily News, 12 June 1909, 4.

On 12 June 1909, the Board was incorporated.<sup>60</sup> As Morris had previously indicated in his letter to Gosling, regulatory powers remained within the exclusive domain of the government. But Morris held out the distinct possibility of greater responsibilities in the future:

...in introducing this Board of Trade Bill we should make haste slowly and only as the body developed should we invest it with higher powers and greater duties. All important fishery questions such as the cull, the making of standards and other matters should still remain with the Legislature. No authority affecting rights of the fishermen should be given away except with their sanction and approval as expressed through their representatives in this House.<sup>61</sup>

Understandably hostile towards the establishment of the Newfoundland Board of Trade, William F. Coaker, president of the newly-formed Fishermen's Protective Union, was perhaps the only dissenting voice in what otherwise appears to have been a chorus of praise for the Board's establishment. In his address to the First Annual Convention of the Supreme Council of the Fishermen's Protective Union on 29 October 1909, Coaker cautioned his followers against the "Merchant's Union of Newfoundland." While he felt that the Board might confer some benefits with regard to the regulation of fish exports, "it must now be carefully watched by us. We must see that it don't use its powers to take the fishermen's dollar." He was relieved that the Board was not given extensive powers to appoint sworn cullers and establish a standard cull

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<sup>60</sup>For a list of members see Daily News, 8 June 1909, 8; and Evening Telegram, 8 June 1914, 7.

<sup>61</sup>Daily News, 12 June 1909, 6.

for fish--an action which he credited to the force of the Union's protest to the government.<sup>62</sup>

With the passing of the Act of Incorporation<sup>63</sup> the Board had passed its first hurdle. The Board was granted limited authority to "fix and establish standards of grades or qualities of fish, lobsters, oils and lumber, and other articles or commodities dealt in by the members of the Association," along with the ability to establish inspection certificates proving quality by the Board's appointed inspectors, cullers, and weighers.<sup>64</sup> But powers to regulate standards remained in the hands of government.

Despite many pressing problems within the fishery, granting regulatory powers to the Board would have been asking too much from the Morris government. Granting any outside agency legislative and regulatory powers may have been a preposterous notion. In an era when governments

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<sup>62</sup>"Journal of Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the Supreme Council of the Fishermen's Protective Union, held in the S.U.F. Hall at Change Islands, October 29th, November 1st, 2nd and 3rd, 1909," in Coaker, ed., Twenty Years, 2, 4.

<sup>63</sup>"An Act to Incorporate the Newfoundland Board of Trade, and for other purposes," 9 Edward VII, Chapter 2. Acts of The General Assembly of Newfoundland, 1909, 7-11. The explicit purpose of the Board act was to: "maintain a commercial exchange; to promote uniformity in the customs and usages of merchants; to inculcate principles of justice and equity in trade; to facilitate the speedy adjustment of business disputes; to acquire and disseminate commercial and economic information; and to secure to its members the benefits of co-operation in the furtherance of their legitimate pursuits." Act of Incorporation and By-Laws of the Newfoundland Board of Trade. (St. John's: Gazette Print, 1909), 5. PANL, MG73, Box #1, file 1.

<sup>64</sup>Act of Incorporation, 24.

did not intervene significantly in the economy, the formation of the Board of Trade as an arm's length advisory committee was an easy and inexpensive alternative to the tough questions related to the management of the fisheries. As an appendage of the government, rather than an active, independent participant in state policy, the Board could serve a convenient role; it could possibly help to bring about real reform in the fisheries through its suggestions and participation, and coincidentally demonstrate to the electorate that fisheries reform was on the agenda. It was a politically astute, and an economically sound move. Should the Board offer any constructive solutions to the problems of the fishery, Morris could appropriate its ideas, yet in the event of criticism of the Board's intentions and of its merchant membership (especially from an increasingly vocal Fishermen's Protective Union), he could also distance himself. While Morris was no doubt concerned about the structural problems of the fisheries, he may have come to understand his government's limitations. The creation of the Board was a useful first step towards fisheries reform, but it could not bring about substantial change by itself. Ultimately, government would have to take the initiative.

Chapter III - Rooms...with a View: The Board of Trade, 1909-1910

The initial months of the Board of Trade's existence were busy. The election in June of a governing Council, the establishment of permanent board rooms in October, and the preparation of its first annual report in January 1910 announced the new organization's presence. Significantly, the Board immediately set out to assess the problems in the fishery and devise remedial measures. By January 1910, the Board had established a working fish inspection service, obtained redress from the various steamship lines for their poor service, and joined with government in the appointment of a trade agent for Brazil. Following Morris' return from London in the autumn of 1909, the Board actively promoted the merits of an inventive waterproof wrapping process for preserving fresh fish (the Sölling process)<sup>1</sup> and encouraged the development of cold storage facilities as a means to develop a fresh fish market on the mainland of North America. Thus by January 1910, the Board could claim that meaningful progress had been made towards combating some of the many problems in the fishery. But while it was a promising start, much more work needed to be done if Newfoundland was to maintain its position in the

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<sup>1</sup>Capt. Sölling, a Danish fish inspector, had invented a reliable waterproof wrapping paper that, if used properly, could keep an individually wrapped fish fresh for up to three weeks. For details on the specific method, see Daily News, 8 November 1909, 4; and "Public Notice - A.W. Piccott, Minister of Marine and Fisheries, 23 April 1910" Yearbook & Almanac of Newfoundland, 1911. (St. John's: J.W. Withers, King's Printer, 1911), Advertisements section, 19.

markets.

On 17 June 1909 the Board hosted a speech by Richard Grigg, the Imperial Trade Commissioner to Canada and Newfoundland. Outlining his duties, Grigg set the tone for the Board's future responsibilities. Lamenting the relative degree of backwardness of Newfoundland's fish trade, Grigg suggested ways in which the new Board could assist in reversing the unsatisfactory nature of the fishery.:

The position appears to be that, although change in methods of production of a revolutionary character in many cases, have occurred in regard to almost every industry, the method of obtaining and of treating your staple products has undergone practically no change for a period of very many years. I refer, of course, to the catching, curing and shipping of your fish.<sup>1</sup>

This situation, he added, had grown worse since "a large catch being secured last year both here and in Norway, has reduced the price to about the level of ten years ago." While high prices "constitute a danger to any Trade," low prices result in "a serious amount of deprivation and suffering, more particularly as the increased cost of all commodities affecting the cost of living." Accordingly, Grigg told the Board that its first duty should be to ascertain "what your competitors are doing," and secondly, determine "the condition of affairs in your markets, with a view of maintaining and increasing your Trade in those markets and of finding

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<sup>1</sup>Daily News, 18 June 1909, 5. See also, Evening Telegram, 18 June 1909, 4.

New Markets." He concluded "that the establishment of such a Board of Trade is highly desirable as a step in the right direction, by providing the machinery for information." The accumulation of trade information and its practical application would be a useful step towards ensuring the future security of Newfoundland's trade. Complacency in the face of stiff competition from the Norwegian and French fisheries, would no longer suffice, Grigg insisted, adding that:

It should always be remembered that no condition is so dangerous to any Trade as the comfortable conviction that, because of past success, markets are safe. Wherever such an attitude prevails, the industry is in peril...it is highly desirable that Fisherman and Merchant should work in harmony for the common good in the adoption of new methods in both the curing and sale of fish, when the necessity of change is demonstrated.<sup>3</sup>

He suggested that the Board of Trade should carefully study the problems of the fish trade and concentrate its focus upon:

EXCELLENCE OF CURE, upon the ESTABLISHMENT OF STANDARDS by reliable Trademark under Government Inspection, and the CREATION OF AGENCIES for the purpose of maintaining a full supply of information, of assisting in case of disputes involving claims for rebates, and of INCREASING THE SALE and of opening NEW MARKETS.<sup>4</sup>

In closing, Grigg outlined the importance of developing cold storage facilities in Newfoundland and pointed to the expansion of the fresh fish market in both the Canadian and American markets. Noting changing consumer demand, Grigg proclaimed that Gloucester was putting up fish "in

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<sup>3</sup>Daily News, 18 June 1909, 5.

<sup>4</sup>Daily News, 18 June 1909, 5.

many attractive forms and by judicious advertising and the aid of commercial travellers is developing it very extensively." He was certain that Newfoundland could also develop a market for its fish in these expanding markets.

Less than two weeks later, on 28 June 1909, the newly-incorporated Newfoundland Board of Trade elected its first governing Council. It consisted of Marmaduke G. Winter, President, Hon. John Harris, First Vice-President and William G. Gosling, Second Vice-President, along with eight Councillors (Hon. Robert K. Bishop, Hon. John Harvey, Hon. John B. Ayre, J.H. Monroe, William A. Munn, William C. Job, Alan F. Goodridge, and John S. Munn).<sup>5</sup> The following month, an additional four members representing specific trades were elected to complete the 15 member Council: Daniel A. Ryan (general outport business), Samuel Milley (dry goods trade), J.J. St. John (retail grocers' trade), and William F. Horwood (lumbering and building trades).<sup>6</sup> The key position of Secretary was filled two months later when George C. Fearn--who with Gosling had spearheaded the Board's establishment--agreed to take on the responsibility.<sup>7</sup> The initial dues-paying members of the Board included many of Newfoundland's leading merchants and politicians. Noticeably absent from the membership roll were representatives of the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company (AND)

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<sup>5</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 28 June 1909 meeting, 23. See also Daily News, 29 June 1909, 1; and Evening Telegram, 29 June 1909, 5.

<sup>6</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 1 July 1909 meeting, 25.

<sup>7</sup>Evening Telegram, 11 August 1909, 4.

and the Reid-Newfoundland Company, or from the Liberal opposition. (It is not known whether these two companies were approached to join, or whether they were even interested in participating.) Included as members were Prime Minister Edward P. Morris; Donald Morison, Minister of Justice; Michael P. Cashin, Minister of Customs and Finance; Robert K. Bishop and John C. Crosbie from the Executive Council. From the Legislative Council came John Harris, President of the Council, John B. Ayre, James D. Ryan, John Anderson, John Harvey, and Samuel Milley. Other House of Assembly members included Archibald W. Piccott, MHA for Harbor Grace and the Minister of Marine and Fisheries; John J. Murphy, MHA for Harbor Main; George Shea, MHA for St. John's East; and Richard A. Squires, MHA for Trinity.<sup>8</sup> (See Appendix 2 for the list of the initial 114 incorporated members.<sup>9</sup>)

On 23 July 1909, Arthur B. Dallas, a resident of Pernambuco, Brazil for some 40 years, addressed the Board on the enormous potential for Newfoundland's fish in an expanded Brazilian market. Dallas did not see any reason why a much greater quantity of fish could not be exported to the areas within the Amazon basin and thought that the Newfoundland government should foster closer relations with the Government of Brazil

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<sup>8</sup>Act of Incorporation and By-Laws of the Newfoundland Board of Trade. (St. John's: Gazette Print, 1909), 3-4. PANL, MG73, Box #1, file 1.

<sup>9</sup>Act of Incorporation, 5.

with a view to the promotion of a reciprocal trade agreement.<sup>10</sup> In reply, William A. Munn pointed to the obvious potential of the Brazilian market:

When we look at the map we see our markets are confined to only the Northern portion of Brazil; why don't we look for new markets in Southern Brazil, which is said to be the richest part of the country. Rio Janeiro, the capital, has nearly one million of a population, but we do not cater to their trade.

Munn elaborated on some of the reasons why Newfoundland had not developed the market in Brazil, pointing out the "audacity" of two Brazilian buyers and their virtual monopoly of the fish trade there. Dallas, however, thought Munn's version of the fish trade in Brazil was "very erroneous." Apologizing for Munn's remarks, George Fearn indicated that "things had transpired in Brazil which had affected their pockets, and when a man loses money he is apt to feel sore." However, he thought that Munn had "hit one nail upon the head which he would like to see driven home, and that was the one of common carriage." If a regular steamer service were introduced, smaller exporters would be able to ship quantities of fish to market and he thought, "it detrimental to the general trade of the Colony that steamers were not employed for this purpose. It was one of the things the Board would have to consider."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Daily News, 24 July 1909, 5; and 26 July 1909, 4. See also, Evening Telegram, 24 July 1909, 4-5.

<sup>11</sup>Daily News, 24 July 1909, 5.

<sup>12</sup>Daily News, 26 July 1909, 4.

During the summer Morris travelled to England, the first of many such sojourns as Prime Minister. Returning in early September following the Imperial Defence Conference,<sup>13</sup> Morris was buoyed with optimism for the future of the fisheries, remarking in a Daily News interview that, "I am more and more satisfied that the greatest need for Newfoundland to-day is the expansion of the fisheries along such lines as will provide new methods of curing, putting up and exporting the catch, and new markets for its consumption."<sup>14</sup> While in London, Morris had discussed the possibilities of introducing tinned codfish into the British army and navy with Sir Francis Hopwood, the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies,<sup>15</sup> and had also met with staff of the British Fishery Board. Morris was proud to report that they were "prepared to do everything in their power to aid us in the development of our fisheries." Morris had also succeeded in convincing the imperial government to allow Newfoundland to attend the upcoming West Indies Conference--a the joint commission to enquire into the reciprocal trade relations between Canada and the West Indies.<sup>16</sup> As well, Arthur B. Dallas, who had recently left Newfoundland for England,

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<sup>13</sup>Anonymous, "Sir Edward Morris's Visit to London," Newfoundland Quarterly IX, 2 (October 1909), 8.

<sup>14</sup>Daily News, 3 September 1909, 5.

<sup>15</sup>Sir Francis Hopwood's 16 August 1909 letter to Morris was reprinted in Daily News, 17 January 1910, 2.

<sup>16</sup>For details see "Statement of Trade Relations Between Newfoundland and the British West Indies," Journal of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland, 1910, 216-35.

called upon Morris to discuss his proposition for enlarging Newfoundland's market in Brazil and other South American countries. Morris indicated that he would soon submit Dallas' proposal to the Board of Trade for consideration.

Inspector Joseph O'Reilly, the Commissioner of Fisheries,<sup>17</sup> had accompanied Morris to England and visited several fishing centres in Scotland to acquaint himself with the latest methods of handling fresh and frozen fish. Returning to London, O'Reilly informed Morris of the existence of an innovative waterproof wrapping paper used in the preservation of fresh fish. Morris immediately arranged an interview with its inventor, Capt. Sölling, a Commissioner of Danish Fisheries.<sup>18</sup> Impressed with Sölling and his process, Morris arranged with the Danish Government for him to visit Newfoundland and purchased a quantity of his "Perfected Wrapping Paper" for a later series of experiments by the Fisheries Department. If the experiments were successful, Morris declared, it would result in "establishing the possibility of marketing our cod, herring, salmon, lobster, and other fish, in a fresh condition, in at least the United States and Canada."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Joseph O'Reilly was the Commissioner of Fisheries with the Fisheries' Protection Service of Newfoundland, S.S. Fiona.

<sup>18</sup>For a brief biography of Sölling and his earlier involvement with Danish steam trawling, see Paul Holm, "The Experience of Danish Steam Trawlers in the North Sea and off Iceland, 1879-1903." Fiskeri-og Sofartsmuseets 3 (1994), 113-57.

<sup>19</sup>Daily News, 3 September 1909, 5.

Despite the absence of many Board members during the summer, the Board was kept busy. Left to its own devices following government's refusal to grant it regulatory powers, the Board decided to act on its own. In an attempt to improve the overall quality of fish exports and stem the tide against foreign reclamations and rejections of overseas fish shipments, the Board Sub-Committee on the Fish Trade met with a number of fish exporters to discuss the matter of uniform standards. "Every man is a law unto himself as regards cull when buying locally and as regards quality when making foreign shipments and terms of contract with foreign buyers."<sup>20</sup> It was imperative that uniformity be established. Two weeks later, the Sub-Committee recommended a set of practical guidelines for the Board's voluntary fish inspection service:

It was agreed to furnish the Inspectors of dry codfish to be packed in casks with the following specifications to aid in the proper discharge of their duties. Size: Twelve to seventeen inches for small; Twenty to twenty three inches for medium; Over Twenty three inches for large. Cask of small should not contain more than 25% of fish under 14". Fish must be of good substance, thoroughly well made, and dry, face and back; well split, free from excess of salt, must be bright in appearance and free from objectionable smell. Special care must be taken not to pack sun-burnt fish in casks. Fish must be packed round the casks smoothly so as to avoid spaces and breakage. It is very desirable to pack fish in "yaffulls." [an armful of dried cod] Cooperage: Nails used to secure bilge hooks must be well clinched on the inside of the casks, so as to avoid tearing the fish and the casks must be otherwise well coopered.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 10 August 1909 meeting, 37-41.

<sup>21</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 2 September 1909 meeting, 49-50. Present at the meeting were: A.F. Goodridge, G.W. Barr, W.C. Job, Alec Bowring, J.C. Hepburn, A.E. Murray, W.S. Monroe, John Harvey, G.S. Carter,

In addition, the Sub-Committee recommended the appointment of one sub-inspector to assist the chief inspector (with further sub-inspector appointments to follow), and a certificate of inspection to verify quality. The recommendations were dispatched to the members of the fish trades, inviting their adoption of the voluntary measures. The cost of the Board's inspection service was set at one cent per quintal.<sup>22</sup> By the end of September the Board had decided to broaden the fish inspection service and reduce the cost to one-half cent per quintal.<sup>23</sup> It is not known how the inspection service operated in practice. Apparently anyone who found the cull unsatisfactory could avail of the Board's adjudication service.<sup>24</sup> Whether this applied to cases between fishers and merchants, or between merchants and exporters is not known. The service, however, was voluntary and contingent on payment of the charge. In January 1910 the Board reported that the inspection service had achieved some beneficial results for those exporters who had used it. And while there remained instances of deterioration from the lengthy crossing of the Atlantic, and an occasional lax cull at the time of shipment, along with a few cases of fraudulent claims from Spanish and Italian consignees, overall, reclamations and rejections had declined. The Board hoped that

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Joseph Outerbridge, and W.H. Franklin.

<sup>22</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 2 September 1909 meeting, 50.

<sup>23</sup>Evening Telegram, 25 September 1909, 4.

<sup>24</sup>Daily News, 27 September 1909, 4.

many more exporters would adopt the measures to protect themselves from unjust and fraudulent claims. "Absolute cohesion of fish exporters" to ship only under the Board of Trade inspection service would solve the problems of reclamations by certifying the quality of fish shipped.<sup>25</sup> And while there were no easy solutions to the widespread problems of cure and buying talqual<sup>26</sup>--a practice which the Board condemned<sup>27</sup>--the inspection service would ensure that minimal standards would be maintained in the foreign markets.

Reaction to the Board's institution of the inspection service from Coaker and the FPU was swift. As far as Coaker was concerned, the Board's decision to establish an inspection service was a abject betrayal of the promise made by the Prime Minister at the Sealers' Meeting the previous spring. On that occasion Morris had pledged to institute a standard cull for fish and a system of government cullers. In his address to the First Annual FPU Convention on 29 October 1909, Coaker condemned Morris and the Board of Trade's inspection service:

If that promise means what has been launched at St. John's recently by the Merchants' Union, I must condemn it....To place sworn cullers under the Board of Trade and to empower it to make rules setting up a standard of cull for codfish would in my opinion be a public calamity, and should be opposed by all our power and influence....If the Merchants' Union,

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<sup>25</sup>Newfoundland Board of Trade, *First Annual Report of the Newfoundland Board of Trade*. (St. John's: Chronicle Print, 1910), 8.

<sup>26</sup>A quoted price for a whole catch of dried or salted cod sold without differentiation of quality or size.

<sup>27</sup>*First Annual Report* (1910), 9-10.

comprised of about 300, consider that 40,000 Fishermen will calmly submit to their methods of buying, culling and exporting codfish, they will find a big mistake is being made, unless I form a wrong opinion of the Fishermen's ideas on those matters.<sup>28</sup>

Following Coaker's address, the FPU committee appointed to draft a memorial to the government [consisting of A.J. Hoff, William Lucas, Walter Burke and James A. Parsons] presented its report. Overall, their concerns mirrored those of the Board of Trade in regard to standards, cullers, the need for government statistics on the fishery, trade agents, and the development of cold storage.<sup>29</sup> The committee's recommendations, however, excluded a role for either the merchants or the Board of Trade. Government control of all aspects of the fishery was paramount for the organized fishermen.

Rejuvenated from the summer's lull, the members of the Board discussed a host of topics at each of its weekly meetings during the autumn of 1909. These included increasing Newfoundland's trade with the West Indies through the facilities of the Imperial Commission on Canada-

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<sup>28</sup>"Journal of Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the Supreme Council of the Fishermen's Protective Union, held in the S.U.F. Hall at Change Islands, October 29th, November 1st, 2nd and 3rd, 1909," in Hon. Sir W.F. Coaker, ed., Twenty Years of the Fishermen's Protective Union of Newfoundland. (Reprint) (St. John's: Creative Printers and Publishers Limited, 1984), 2, 4.

<sup>29</sup>Coaker, ed., Twenty Years, 7-13.

West Indies Trade,<sup>30</sup> improvements to the telegraph service,<sup>31</sup> construction of a new hotel,<sup>32</sup> discussion of the provision and flour trade,<sup>33</sup> and improvement in facilities for the transshipment of fish.

Members were dissatisfied with the steamship service offered by the Allan-Furness, Red Cross and Black Diamond steamship lines. In particular, the Allan-Furness Line's irregular shipping schedules between St. John's and Liverpool proved a considerable inconvenience to the export trade, as transshipment delays to European ports from Liverpool were "causing probable endless disputes, rejections of goods, and consequent

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<sup>30</sup>Daily News, 27 September 1909, 4 and 14 October 1909, 4. The Board established a sub-committee on the Imperial Commission to aid Minister of Finance and Customs, Michael Cashin to prepare a statement for submission to the conference on Newfoundland's trade position in connection with Canada and the West Indies. See "Statement of Trade Relations Between Newfoundland and the British West Indies," Journal of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland, 1910. (St. John's: Evening Chronicle, 1910), 216-235.

<sup>31</sup>Daily News, 6 October 1909, 4; Evening Telegram, 5 October 1909, 5; and 7 October 1909, 6.

<sup>32</sup>Board of Trade Minute Book #3, 17 October 1909 meeting, 64-6 and Daily News, 13 October 1909, 5. See the following issues of the Evening Telegram for a series of interviews with prominent businessmen on the subject of the new hotel, 13 October 1909, 4 (interviews with E.R. Bowring and H.D. Reid); 14 October 1909, 4 (interviews with George Shea, of the firm of Shea & Co., agents for the Allan Line, W.C. Job, and J.W.N. Johnstone of the Reid Nfld. Co.); 16 October 1909, 6 (interviews with G. Massey of Reid Nfld. Co., Hon. James Baird, and W.D. Reid); and 18 October 1909, 4 (interviews with W.G. Gosling, and Capt. Clarke's of the S.S. Florizel). The subject of a new hotel engaged the attention of quite a number of Board meetings during the autumn of 1909, see Daily News, 18 October 1909, 1; 16 November 1909, 4; 22 November 1909, 4; and Evening Telegram, 21 October 1909, 7; 22 October 1909, 7; 27 October 1909, 6; and 16 November 1909, 4.

<sup>33</sup>Daily News, 14 October 1909, 8; and 27 November 1909, 1.

heavy losses.<sup>34</sup> The Board charged that the Line had not consigned a steamer to St. John's during the latter half of September but had recently rescheduled three steamers to ship consignments of apples along the Halifax-London route. Incensed, the Board demanded that the Line maintain a regular schedule of sailings so that shippers could be assured guaranteed service and avoid lengthy and costly delays in getting fish to the Spanish and Portuguese markets. The Red Cross Line service from St. John's to New York also had proven unsatisfactory to the needs of the exporters; only one sailing had taken place between 24 January and 2 March 1908.<sup>35</sup> If Newfoundland exporters were to make inroads into the mainland fish markets regular shipping schedules would have to be standardized and maintained. The difficulties prompted the Board to establish a Steamship Company Committee to meet with the local steamship agents and make recommendations to solve the problems. Immediate results followed. John Harvey of the Red Cross Line presented the Board with a regular schedule of sailings for the period 31 December 1909 to 1 October 1910.<sup>36</sup> A

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<sup>34</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 1 October 1909 meeting, 63.

<sup>35</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 15 October 1909 meeting, 73.

<sup>36</sup>The Steamship Company Committee (Pitts, Outerbridge and Shea) met with steamship agents Hickman, Murray and Hepburn and presented them its six demands: that the Red Cross and other lines of steamers should always sail according to their proposed schedules; that the steamship agents must provide adequate storage to receive the cargo of any steamer immediately upon the departure of the preceding one; that all applications for freight share be made in writing and confirmed in the same manner; that all freight arrangements shall be subject to 10% more or less; that all shipments of freight shall be made in order of engagement; and that the cost of stowing fish as set down shall be paid by the steamship agents.

meeting with A.T. Weldon of Montreal's Black Diamond Line also produced positive results. Acknowledging the need for a better service, Weldon promised substantial improvement.<sup>37</sup> In March 1910, Weldon informed the Board by letter that the "Black Diamond Service will continue on much improved lines, larger and better boats will be employed and an effort made to maintain weekly service."<sup>38</sup>

While many topics came under the scrutiny of the Board that autumn, the development of the fishery was at the forefront of its concern. A great deal of attention was given to the appointment of a Brazilian trade agent, the merits of the Sölling process and the advantages of developing a system of cold storage facilities. On 1 October 1909, the Board considered the report of the sub-committee appointed to review a letter from Morris proposing the temporary appointment of a travelling commercial agent in Brazil.<sup>39</sup> The sub-committee was in favour of an agent's appointment, and agreed that Arthur B. Dallas would be suitable for the job. However, the committee cautioned that Dallas should work exclusively for the whole of the Newfoundland trade and "should be carefully

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"Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 29 October 1909 Report, 84.

<sup>37</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 10 December 1909 meeting, 95.

<sup>38</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 23 March 1910 meeting, 129-30. See also First Interim Report of the Board of Trade, 26 March 1910, "Board of Trade Minute Book #1," (insert), 5.

<sup>39</sup>Members of the committee included Eric Bowring, Alan F. Goodridge, David Baird, William C. Job, Albert E. Hickman, Walter B. Grieve, and A.T. Ritchie.

instructed not to advocate the business interest of any firm exporting fish from Newfoundland or buying it in Brazil." Strategically, he should confine his work to the extreme north and south of Brazil, avoiding areas already within the sphere of influence of existing Brazilian fish importers. For his work, Dallas was to receive his usual commission on sales, while his travelling expenses and one half of his honorarium would be paid by the government. The other half would be paid by the Board of Trade.<sup>40</sup>

On the afternoon of 25 October, the Board celebrated the opening of its permanent rooms in the Gazette Building.<sup>41</sup> Commenting on the opening of the Board's rooms, the Daily News regarded its establishment as an "agency for the common weal," that would "make good" in its promise to promote Newfoundland's business interests both at home and abroad:

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<sup>40</sup>Daily News, 4 October 1909, 4. Dallas was appointed later that month and worked the Brazil market attempting to establish new markets for fish, especially on the River Plate until his death on 5 October 1910. "Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 5 November 1909, 82; and "Board of Trade Minute Book #2," 25 November 1910 meeting, 7. See Brazil Markets Sub-Committee Report in "Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 12 October 1909 meeting, 66, 71. For specific details on Dallas' instructions, see "Board of Trade Minute Book #3," 11 September 1909 meeting, 4-6. Dallas was instructed to concentrate his activities in the extreme North and South of Brazil, avoid areas already established as markets and to work for the good of all exporters in the Colony and not for any one specific business concern. For details of Dallas' activities and the trade conditions in Brazil see the coded letters from Dallas to the Board of Trade, 16 March, 13 April, 4 July, 6 July, and 20 August 1910. (The code for the letters is contained in the 16 March 1910 letter). Board of Trade Correspondence, PANL, MG73, Box #2, file 2.

<sup>41</sup>Evening Telegram, 25 October 1909, 5.

A Board of Trade cannot do everything; neither can it initiate everything; but it can do a great deal to initiate, encourage and carry to success, enterprises which have for their object the extension of commerce, the improvement of existing methods and the introduction of new ones.<sup>42</sup>

The Board's rooms were more than working offices; it was a place where both local and outport members could fraternize. Open from 9 am to 8 pm, the "comfortably furnished" rooms offered every facility "for the conduct of correspondence and for the transaction of business."<sup>43</sup> There, members could update themselves on the latest trade news by perusing a variety of newspapers and journals devoted to trade and commerce, including, Canadian Grocer, Draper's Record, Economist, Daily Telegraph, New York Fishing Gazette, Commercial Bulletin, Cincinnati, Prices Current, Canadian Lumberman, and Trade Bulletin of Montreal.<sup>44</sup> As well, the Board used its rooms to sponsor a number of important civic lectures, including addresses by Dr. Cluny McPherson on behalf of the Association for the Prevention of Consumption [tuberculosis],<sup>45</sup> and meetings to form a local St. John Ambulance Association.<sup>46</sup>

In late October Capt. Sölling toured the southwest coast of

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<sup>42</sup>Daily News, 27 October 1909, 4.

<sup>43</sup>First Annual Report (1910), 29.

<sup>44</sup>Daily News, 18 October 1909, 4.

<sup>45</sup>Daily News, 18 February, 6; and 4 March 1910, 1.

<sup>46</sup>Daily News, 12 April 1910, 5.

Newfoundland on board the S.S. Fiona with A. W. Piccott, Minister of Marine and Fisheries, and Inspector O'Reilly.<sup>47</sup> Returning to St. John's following the experiments, Sölling addressed a meeting of the Board on 8 November 1909.<sup>48</sup> For the most part, Sölling read from a prepared pamphlet elaborating on the correct method of wrapping individual fish in his patented waterproof paper, the associated costs of the process, and the results of his early experiments on various fishes such as halibut, salmon, and boiled lobsters. He was reasonably convinced that his process would advance Newfoundland's fresh fish trade in the United States and Canada, but was uncertain whether the process would be economically feasible in the case of cod. "It will not pay to treat all kinds of fish according to this method, but prime fish, such as Soles, Turbot, Brill and Halibut perhaps Cod and Plaice, would fetch a much higher price in the market if treated in this way than is now the case."<sup>49</sup>

Sölling then outlined several problems in relation to the

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<sup>47</sup>For details of Sölling's experiments onboard the S.S. Fiona, see O'Reilly's "Report of Fisheries' Protection Service of Newfoundland for the Year 1909," Journal of the House of Assembly, 1910, 415-28.

<sup>48</sup>Daily News, 21 October 1909, 8. The Board of Trade had interviewed Capt. Sölling on 22 October 1909 on his particular methods of preserving fish. Sölling also assisted the Board in the translation of Norwegian documents sent by the British Consul at Christiana. "Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 76, 82, 127, 132. Following the Fiona trip with Piccott and O'Reilly, Capt. Sölling then met with the Board and reported on the conditions that he had found on the coast, recommending substantial changes in the manner of production. See Capt. Sölling to Newfoundland Board of Trade, 1909, PANL, MG73, Box #1, file 10.

<sup>49</sup>Daily News, 9 November 1909, 4; and Evening Telegram, 8 November 1909, 5.

Newfoundland fishery which might prevent the full exploitation of his process. Chief among them were Newfoundland's distance from the fresh fish market and the costs associated with transportation. Moreover, he condemned fishermen's catching and curing methods. "I was forcibly struck by the crude methods, and, I must say, the manner in which some of the fishermen handle their fish. They seem to forget that fish is an article of food, and some certainly do not treat it as such." He was strongly of the opinion that a strict cull should be rigidly enforced to induce fishermen to make good fish. Sölling cautioned that there were few prospects of developing a fresh fish market if processing methods were not radically changed:

...I cannot too strongly urge on you the prime importance, in conjunction with my process, of using the utmost cleanliness in all the handling of the fish. Otherwise no process can be successful....I am certain, from my observations, that the fishing industry of Newfoundland has very bright prospects and great possibilities. But the preparation of the fish and the marketing must be done on modern, up-to-date lines. It is useless to expect the best prices for fish any more than for anything else unless care is exercised in preparing it for the consumer.<sup>50</sup>

For commentators like Judge Prowse, there was no doubt about the feasibility of the Sölling method for developing new fresh fish markets. In his opinion, there was "a fine margin of profit for our people," despite the initial costs and transportation expenses. The development of a fresh fish market would be the dawning of a new age for Newfoundland and

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<sup>50</sup>Daily News, 9 November 1909, 4.

her fisheries:

If it can be shown successfully, and satisfactorily that codfish can be shipped to New York in its fresh state, either by the Sölling process or by cold storage; immediately that fact is established, and that it can sell at a profit, then begins the dawn of the day when the foreign markets for our salt cod will be eased off, and we can begin to develop our fisheries, to a very much larger and wider extent. There is absolutely no use, as the Premier stated in his address to the Board of Trade the other day, in developing our fisheries if we do not develop our markets as well....It must be a pleasure to all who are interested in the development of our trade and the increase in the price of our fish to note day by day the entirely new life which is being called into existence in relation to this vital matter.<sup>51</sup>

While many were confident that Sölling's wrapping paper would preserve fish fresh for some three weeks,<sup>52</sup> there were growing concerns that the process was not economically viable. The chief obstacle was high transportation costs. Minister of Marine and Fisheries, A.W. Piccott, doubted its economic viability:

We learned from our little experience that the transportation of fresh fish, under present conditions, is surrounded with many difficulties. The transportation charges are so high that a cheap fish like cod would, we think, leave but a small margin of profit. In transporting small quantities of fresh fish, it requires to be forwarded by express. The express charge alone, from Sydney to Montreal, is about \$5 per hundred pounds at the present time, but arrangements can doubtless be made for a reduction sufficient to render business on a larger

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<sup>51</sup>Evening Telegram, 1 November 1909, 7.

<sup>52</sup>See Daily News, 15 November 1909, 5; 1 December 1909, 4; 3 December 1909, 4; 6 December 1909, 7; 9 December 1909, 5; 30 December 1909, 4; and 3 February 1910, 4. See also Evening Telegram, 1 December 1909, 6; 4 December 1909, 4; and 8 December 1909, 4.

scale both practical and profitable.<sup>53</sup>

The Evening Telegram's "1909 - Review of the Year," also had grave doubts. While the Sölling process might prove viable for some species, cod could not turn a profit in the North American markets:

It has been established that our fish would have to be put in the hands of the fish agents at about 2 cents a pound in the maritime market of America, and then the sale would be doubtful. The same difficulty seems to exist in regard to Montreal, Toronto, Hamilton and other places. Fresh fish is put in the hands of agents at 2½ and 3 cents a pound out of cold storage in Montreal. These agents dispose of it to wholesale sellers, the latter to the retailers, and by the time it gets in the hands of the consumers its price has advanced to 12 cents a pound. Under such a system and at such prices ex-cold storage, there appears to be little room for the exploitation of fresh cod in these places.<sup>54</sup>

The solution was to reduce transportation costs and develop a system of cold storage facilities so that fresh fish might fetch a reasonable price when seasonal demand was high.

While most Board of Trade members generally supported the Sölling process, others publicly doubted the usefulness of the process. Walter B. Grieve thought it was not "sufficiently proven to justify any expression as to its success." The Board's President, Marmaduke G. Winter, disagreed noting that "several experiments had been made, and had, so far, proved satisfactory." George Fearn, as well, voiced his continued support.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Piccott and O'Reilly to Morris, 8 December 1909, "Annual Report of Department of Marine and Fisheries Newfoundland, 1909." Journal of the House of Assembly, 1910, 452-4.

<sup>54</sup>Evening Telegram, 31 December 1909, 4.

<sup>55</sup>Daily News, 25 January 1910, 4.

Overall, the membership of the Board was impressed with Sölling and his process, to the point where it was even suggested that "a company with a capital of \$200,000 to \$250,000 ought to be formed for the purposes of shipping fish under the Sölling process and in the various styles of preparation found in Gloucester and other markets."<sup>56</sup> It is not known how extensive the use of process may have been; P.J. Power of St. Mary's believed it possible to use Sölling's process to break into the American market and planned to ship fish to New York's Fulton Market during the summer of 1911.<sup>57</sup> However, there may have been a much wider application of Sölling's process as both the Board and the Department of Marine and Fisheries made reference to a number of incidents of negligence. In its First Interim Report on 26 March 1910, the Board indicated that during the winter several parcels of fish had arrived in St. John's carelessly processed.<sup>58</sup> The following month, on 23 April 1910, the Department of Marine and Fisheries issued a public notice detailing the correct method for processing fish using the Sölling method.<sup>59</sup>

At the opening of the Legislature in 1910, the Sölling process came

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<sup>56</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 23 March 1910 meeting, 127.

<sup>57</sup>Daily News, 2 February 1910, 1.

<sup>58</sup>"First Interim Report of the Board of Trade, 26 March 1910," "Board of Trade Minute Book #1," (insert), 2-3.

<sup>59</sup>"Public Notice - A.W. Piccott, Minister of Marine and Fisheries, 23 April 1910" Year Book & Almanac, 1911, Advertisement section, 19. The notice was repeated the following year in Year Book & Almanac, 1912 (St. John's: J.W. Withers, King's Printer, 1912), Advertisement section, 15 (dated February 1912).

under close scrutiny. Sir Robert Bond, in reply to the Speech from the Throne, derided the government's continued promotion of the method. While he had no doubts to the claims that the Sölling method could keep a single fish perfectly fresh for up to two weeks, he ridiculed its ability to reform the entire industry:

I think it may prove of very great value to those who have a few friends abroad to whom they desire to send a present of some fresh fish or to some poor women in the out harbours who may wish to send a small parcel of fish to the grocer. But this is not revolutionizing the fish industry. To do this it would be necessary to displace some one hundred and fifty thousand quintals of dried fish. Dare any rational being tell this deliberative assembly that we are going to have 150,000 qtls of fish packed in separate papers?<sup>60</sup>

By February 1912, barely a mention was made of the Sölling process by either Morris, or the Board of Trade. "What good has come of all the "booming" of the Solling process?" asked the Liberal Evening Telegram in February 1912,

...it all resulted in nothing. It was found that codfish could not be put in the cold storage plants of Montreal at a cost which would cover expenses and leave anything worth while for the fishermen. The whole boom proved a fizzle, and to-day we hear nothing of the Solling process.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the seeming inadequacies of Sölling's process, many remained confident that the establishment of steamer and coastal facilities would alleviate the inherent stresses of overproduction in the Newfoundland

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<sup>60</sup>Daily News, 3 February 1910, 6 (House of Assembly for 26 January 1910.)

<sup>61</sup>Evening Telegram, 1 February 1912, 8.

fishery. Indeed, the promotion of cold storage to regulate supply had been a key plank in Morris' 1908 and 1909 manifestos.<sup>62</sup> In his 15 March 1909 address in support of the formation of a trade board, he argued that cold storage was "bound to revolutionize the whole world," and that in Newfoundland's case, it would provide the impetus to break into the North American markets, and also tend to improve the prices paid to fishermen. He was satisfied that "the whole of our winter codfishery on the West Coast, amounting to about fifty or sixty thousand quintals of fish, could be put up in cold storage." In Morris' estimation, limiting the supply of fish by controlling the quantity available for export would solve the problems of seasonal overproduction and foreign market gluts. He believed that if Newfoundland could place a large quantity of salt fish in cold storage, its foreign market price at the start of the season would increase and would additionally maintain the price on the remaining balance of fish during the off season when the market supply was scarce.<sup>63</sup>

In October, a deputation consisting of Eric R. Bowring, John Harvey and Outerbridge, representing the Red Cross Line, met Morris to discuss

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<sup>62</sup>For the 1908 Manifesto planks see Daily News, 7 October 1908, 7; and 8 October 1908, 4. For 1909, see Daily News, 12 April 1909, 3. Four years previous, Morris had participated in the signing of an agreement between the Bond Government and James W. Wright representing the Newfoundland Cold Storage and Reduction Company, Ltd. for a project to subsidize a cold storage scheme for the export of fresh fish. Evening Telegram, 2 December 1909, 4. See William G. Reeves, "Alexander's Conundrum Reconsidered: The American Dimension in Newfoundland Resource Development, 1898-1910," Newfoundland Studies 5, 1 (Spring 1989), 15.

<sup>63</sup>Daily News, 15 March 1909, 4.

the establishment of cold storage facilities in St. John's and on its steamers. E.H. Stoddart, the line's New York representative,<sup>64</sup> indicated that he had made arrangements to dispatch a first class expert on cold storage to Newfoundland.<sup>65</sup> The expert, a Mr. Kershaw, addressed the Board of Trade in late December. By all reports, the meeting was an enthusiastic one, with Kershaw outlining "the whole process of cold storage as regards its application to our fisheries; the possibilities to Newfoundland in relation thereto; what other countries are doing in connection with this subject, and what Newfoundland may do in a similar direction."<sup>66</sup> Following his address, Morris pointed to the great advantages in store for Newfoundland and the great possibilities for the fisheries. He suggested that the Board investigate:

...with a view to establishing our needs and requirements in this respect; and the possibility of realizing profitably upon our fishery products after their preservation in this manner; also to how great an extent an application of cold storage would benefit and develop our fisheries, and lessen the quantities now unloaded on the Mediterranean and other markets; thus increasing the value of the fish sent to those great markets.<sup>67</sup>

William C. Job, Walter B. Grieve, Marmaduke G. Winter, and George C.

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<sup>64</sup>The Board of Trade had in the previous month negotiated a reduction of the Brazilian freight rates with Stoddart. Daily News, 27 September 1909, 2.

<sup>65</sup>"Fresh Fish and the Fulton Market," Evening Telegram, 1 November 1909, 7. [by D.W. Prowse, 30 October 1909].

<sup>66</sup>Daily News, 30 December 1909, 1; and Evening Telegram, 30 December 1909, 6.

<sup>67</sup>Daily News, 30 December 1909, 1.

Fearn spoke in support of the development of cold storage facilities. All pointed out the many advantages and the "boundless possibilities which the process would open up if once installed in the Colony, provided such could be done on a remunerative basis." Another meeting of the Board of Trade was soon promised, when a "Committee will be appointed to enquire into and investigate the whole question of cold storage, so that all may know in what light the matter stands in relation to Newfoundland."<sup>68</sup>

A few days earlier, Morris met with Joseph J. Lane, Treasurer of the Traders' Wharf and Warehouse Company of Boston, and a Director of both the Boston Fish Cold Storage Company, and the Newbury Port Fish Cold Storage Company of Newbury Port, Massachusetts. Before returning to Boston, Lane made a number of proposals in relation to the establishment of an extensive cold storage plant system in Newfoundland, including the provision of steamers fitted with cold storage facilities.<sup>69</sup> Despite high optimism on the part of Morris and the Board, such early proposals did not bear any concrete agreements to establish cold storage facilities.

The 1908-09 fishery was an improvement over the previous year in terms of production, with a total export of some 1,800,000 quintals, of which 1,000,000 quintals were supplied to the Mediterranean markets. But average fish prices declined from the previous year. Increased foreign

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<sup>68</sup>Daily News, 30 December 1909, 1.

<sup>69</sup>Daily News, 30 December 1909, 1.

competition, improved methods, and "bounty-fed" French fish had placed Newfoundland's fish at a disadvantage in the markets. As well, money had been lost on overseas shipments, "chiefly through injudicious shipping and the congestion resulting from over-eagerness on the part of shippers in rushing cargoes to market."<sup>70</sup> Despite continued setbacks, with "little or no attempt to alter the cure of salt codfish to meet the desires or requirements of the markets generally," a number of entrepreneurs had made some progress towards establishing alternative processes and markets for Newfoundland's fish. Citing several instances of innovation in the fisheries, the 1909 Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries commended the efforts of Samways of Burgeo to establish a cold storage plant for the processing of squid for bait, and of Grand Bruit's Chetwynd in the processing of boneless cod.<sup>71</sup>

Other processors, such as Fortune's Lake and Fogo's Earle had

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<sup>70</sup>"Annual Report of Department of Marine and Fisheries Newfoundland, 1909," 376.

<sup>71</sup>Sölling, Piccott, and O'Reilly had met Chetwynd during the series of experiments conducted from the S.S. Fiona during October 1909. As O'Reilly reported, "While at Grand Bruit we had the pleasure of seeing his factory, where he is putting up boneless cod. Captain Sölling was agreeably surprised by the way in which this work was done, and the great care that was taken in putting up an excellent article. The place was spotlessly clean, and the workers were impressed with the idea that they were putting up an article of food, and acted accordingly. This is a new industry with Mr. Chetwynd. He has been successful, and has a profitable market for all the fish that he can put up. The greater portion of his fish goes to the Canadian markets, especially Montreal, where the fish dealers speak in highest terms of his cure and pack." Joseph O'Reilly, "Report of Fisheries' Protection Service of Newfoundland for the Year 1909, by Joseph O'Reilly, Commissioner of Fisheries, S.S. Fiona," Journal of the House of Assembly, 1910, 415.

achieved a small degree of success for their products in the North American market. Lake, in particular, had recently received an order from the United States Navy for 100 cases of tinned fish, while Earle had just recently conducted a tour of Canadian cities in an effort to establish contacts for his preserved fish. St. John's tinmaker, John Clouston, who held a patented artificial fish-drying process, had exported tinned shredded codfish to Western Canada and in addition was carrying out extensive experiments in the manufacture of codfish skins as a leather substitute. He had begun manufacturing glue, guano and other by-products at his factory at Hoylestown.<sup>72</sup> From the Department's perspective, Samways, Chetwynd, Lake, Earle and Clouston were but the leading edge of a movement that would in future revolutionize the Newfoundland fisheries:

The year just ended shows a marked advance in the progress made in the development of the various processes of manufacturing and preserving fish, and in a more general attempt to cater and please the consumer. The adoption of packages which are suitable to the requirements of the various dealers and pleasing to purchasers, the introduction of business methods in the establishment of agents, the proper advertisement and exploiting of these articles and the procuring of rates and freights have met with success to date, and larger results can be looked out for in future.<sup>73</sup>

The 1909 Fisheries Report also saw great promise in the establishment of the Board of Trade for the fisheries, and also "on every matter connected

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<sup>72</sup>"Annual Report of Department of Marine and Fisheries Newfoundland, 1909," 382. See also Evening Telegram, 30 June 1909, 5; and Reeves, "Alexander's Conundrum," 17.

<sup>73</sup>"Annual Report of Department of Marine and Fisheries Newfoundland, 1909," 384.

with business throughout Newfoundland." It had in its brief existence procured "more advantageous terms, the better regulating of freights and rates, the settlement of claims and reclamations, and the handling, as a body, of many matters which heretofore have been left to the individual." It was an active and necessary participant in state policy and "its advice and co-operation will also be sought on all subjects which may arise in connection with this department."<sup>74</sup>

On 17 January 1910 the 289 registered members of the Newfoundland Board of Trade convened to listen to Secretary George C. Fearn and the presentation of the Board's First Annual Report. Although the Board had only been in existence for seven months, the scope of the subjects considered in the Report were extensive. In his address, Fearn referred to many matters, including the need for regular and dependable steamship services, the inadequacies of the telephone and telegraph services, the importance of the West Indies Commission,<sup>75</sup> closer steam communication

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<sup>74</sup>"Annual Report of Department of Marine and Fisheries Newfoundland, 1909," 386.

<sup>75</sup>Minister of Finance and Customs, Michael P. Cashin, in conjunction with the Board of Trade had prepared Newfoundland's case for the Commission and had just three days earlier departed for the West Indies. Daily News, 14 January 1910, 4; and Evening Telegram, 14 January 1910, 4. Newfoundland's position in the trade relations between Canada and the West Indies was dealt with separately in the release of the Commission's Report in October 1910. The Commissioners were in favour of Newfoundland becoming a party to any of the benefits that might accrue to Canada from preferential tariffs. Newfoundland's geographical position, however, precluded any agreement for a steamship service which would call at St. John's on the way to and from Canada and the West Indies. The

with St. Pierre, deficiencies in the postal system's C.O.D. service, the Tourist Traffic Committee's recommendation for the site of the new hotel, the high cost of coooperage, steam trawling on the Banks, inaccuracy in the gauging of molasses, and irregularities in duties.<sup>76</sup> The fisheries were, however, of utmost concern. There were deficiencies, but progress was also being made on several fronts; the Sölling method had opened up the possibilities of the export fresh fish; Arthur B. Dallas had been appointed trade agent for Brazil, and government was encouraging the erection of an extensive system of cold storage plants.<sup>77</sup> In an increasingly competitive international market, Newfoundland desperately required quality fish products to match those from Norway, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands, a fact emphasized in frequent communications received from the British consul at Christiana, Norway.<sup>78</sup> Deep concern was expressed on the question of the cure of fish and the demoralizing effect that the purchase of fish talqual had on both the fishermen and the trade:

Not only is this manner of dealing in fish disastrous to the

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Commissioners suggested that a branch service connecting Halifax and St. John's should be provided. Daily News, 14 October 1910, 1.

<sup>76</sup>Daily News, 18 January 1910, 4; and Evening Telegram, 18 January 1910, 4.

<sup>77</sup>First Annual Report (1910), 8-9.

<sup>78</sup>See document by C. Joys entitled "About Codfish." This handwritten report dated September 1909 from Bergen, Norway, detailed the nature of the Norwegian codfishery and made recommendations as to the production of codfish. The recommendations are strikingly similar to those detailed in Appendix 3. Newfoundland Board of Trade Correspondence, PANL, MG73, Box #1, file 8.

fishermen, making him, so long as he can sell his fish talqual, careless and indifferent, but it gives endless dissatisfaction to the buyers of Newfoundland fish abroad, decreases the wealth of the Colony, and is generally hurtful to our best commercial interests.<sup>79</sup>

The solution was simple; the government must grant the Board extensive powers to regulate and enforce standards of cure and cull:

It is very difficult, indeed, under the existing conditions in the Colony to deal effectively with the question of selling fish talqual, and the Council are of opinion that until the Government see their way clear to give the Board of Trade legislative authority to establish standards of fish and regulate the cull accordingly that it will be impossible to bring about any genuine improvement.<sup>80</sup>

The question of providing the Board with exclusive regulatory powers to control standards again came before the House of Assembly during the 1910 opening session. Commenting on the Speech from the Throne on 26 January 1910, Richard A. Squires, MHA for Trinity, and a future Prime Minister, reiterated the government's policy on the matter. As far as he was concerned, "the Legislature is the place for dealing with certain measures especially those affecting or regulating the fate of our staple industry [and] it should not be delegated to any Board or corporation."<sup>81</sup> On 19 March, William C. Job,<sup>82</sup> speaking on second reading of an amendment

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<sup>79</sup>First Annual Report (1910), 10.

<sup>80</sup>First Annual Report (1910), 9.

<sup>81</sup>Daily News, 29 January 1910, 6.

<sup>82</sup>William C. Job, Marmaduke G. Winter and John Alexander Robinson had recently been appointed to the Legislative Council. Daily News, 26 January 1910, 4.

to the Board of Trade bill<sup>83</sup> in the Legislative Council, attempted to allay the fears of the members of the Assembly by explaining the motivations behind the Board's request for the power to regulate standards in the fishery:

The complaint of the outharbour man in the past has been that he does not know what is merchantable fish and what is Madeira fish, as they vary every year, and there is always great dissatisfaction in consequence. Now, Sir, that is what the Board of Trade is trying to correct, and all they wanted to do was to be allowed to define these qualities, so that anyone who was in doubt would be guided thereby. The privilege was a purely passive one, and could hurt no one. I am of opinion that the members of the Lower House who discouraged this measure did not understand the motive of the Board, and believe if the fishermen were explained the matter, that they would be the first to favour the standardizing of the different qualities...The cure of fish is as important to the welfare of all as the catch of fish, and I hope the time will come when the politician, as well as those interested in the trade, will bear the part of the responsibility this question entails...we are hopeful that those members of the Lower House, after talking the matter over with the fishermen will be convinced that by defining all the different grades of fish the fishermen as well as the shipper will benefit, and that next year the Board's request will be acceded to.<sup>84</sup>

In the end, the Board of Trade received additional powers to appoint committees of arbitration--a responsibility that it requested in the original Board of Trade Bill--but was again denied the authority to establish a standardized cure for various fishes. Rebuffed, the Board had to resign itself to the prospect that it would never receive legislative

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<sup>83</sup>"An Act to amend 9 Edward VII., Chapter 2, entitled 'An Act to Incorporate the Newfoundland Board of Trade and for other purposes,'" 10 Edward VII, Cap. 1. Acts of the General Assembly of Newfoundland, 1910, 5-6.

<sup>84</sup>Daily News, 19 April 1910, 6.

powers to regulate the fishery and that its role would substantially be confined to that of government advisor.

During its first months of existence the Board demonstrated that it was an amenable if not necessary partner in the formulation and implementation of government's policy on the fisheries and that it could on its own initiate practical measures to attack some of the more glaring deficiencies of the fisheries. As an adjunct to government it had assisted in the appointment of a Brazilian trade agent, assisted government prepare its submission to the Canada-West Indies Commission, and supported the Sölling experiments. On its own it had lobbied the various steamship companies for a redress of their inferior service and had initiated a practical, albeit voluntary, fish inspection service in an attempt to guarantee market quality abroad. Useful though the measures were, they would not bring about widespread reform in an industry that essentially remained tied to tradition-bound methods of production. Combating centuries of habitual neglect on the part of all the participants in the fishery would have required not only a new way of thinking about the fishery, but government intervention on a scale previously unheard of for Newfoundland and its government. The Board of Trade's activities in those few short months were a promising start; perhaps, if luck and time were on its side, it might, with government's help, stop the further deterioration of Newfoundland's fishery.

Chapter IV - The Board of Trade and Fisheries Reform, 1910-1915

The period from 1910 to 1915 was relatively prosperous for Newfoundland. In 1910, fish prices rebounded. Moreover, the economy was boosted by the generation of substantial employment in the forestry and mining sectors, especially at Grand Falls and Bell Island,<sup>1</sup> along with employment from the construction of the branch railways.<sup>2</sup> And while the major problems of cull, cure and standards continued to plague the fishery throughout the period, a measure of progress was otherwise attained through the development of advanced fish products by some of the colony's leading entrepreneurs, and through sales of large quantities of green fish (salt bulk) to the Americans. As well, the prospect of establishing cold storage facilities encouraged by government incentives, promised a possible way to advance the products of the fishery, solve the problems of seasonal overproduction in the fishery, and secure its position in the marketplace. It was a period of prosperity tinged with a widely-held optimism for the future; indeed, many felt that Newfoundland's downward

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<sup>1</sup>For background material, see James Hiller, "The Origins of the Pulp and Paper Industry in Newfoundland." Acadiensis, XI, 2 (Spring 1982), 42-68; and William G. Reeves, "Our Yankee Cousins': Modernization and the Newfoundland-American Relationship, 1898-1910." (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Maine, 1987), chapter 8 for the forestry industry and chapter 7 for background material on mineral development.

<sup>2</sup>Daily News, 7 February 1913, 4. It is not known how much the building of the branch railways may have contributed to the overall progress of the economy during this time. For background material, see James K. Hiller, The Newfoundland Railway, 1881-1940. (St. John's: Newfoundland Historical Society, 1981), 20.

economic course had finally been reversed. The improvement of the economy during 1910 to 1914, however, delayed any meaningful attempt at government reform of the fisheries. Satisfied with the progress of the economy, government's sense of urgency lessened. Lured into a false sense of security, government felt that it still had adequate time to devise solutions, and to effect widespread reform. It was not until 1914 that the government finally attended to longer term solutions. However, it soon discovered that it could do little to solve the enormous problems of the fishery. Then worldwide events overtook the pace of reform. Essentially Morris concentrated his attention on easier, more immediate answers to the problems of the fishery--the Sölling process, cold storage, the sale of salt bulk to the Americans, and the Hague Arbitration--rather than tackling the harder questions of standards.

During this period the Newfoundland Board of Trade continued to lobby government on a wide variety of subjects, with little effect in fishery reform. It achieved a small of measure of success in convincing the government to establish trade agents for Spain and Italy, but it was unable to persuade the government to take immediate action on the harder question of fishery standards. The inability of the Board to influence government on most aspects of the fishery, both major and minor, underscores its fundamentally weak relationship with the government and the rudimentary bureaucracy. It could not bring about reform to the

fishery on its own; it had to rely on government to place the Board's concerns on its agenda. The bureaucracy, as well, seemed incapable of carrying out the simplest of Board requests. Its continued request for government to provide comprehensive fishery statistics, for example, failed largely because of incompetence and indifference on the part of outport customs officials, who did not report accurately on the fishery. Here, the unprofessional nature of the bureaucracy undermined the Board's attempts at improvement. Indeed, many departmental bureaucracies existed in name only. Characterized by inefficiency and incompetence, the bureaucracy was ill-equipped for substantive reform. By 1913, however, the Board's role as government consultant began to diminish and its relationship with Morris deteriorated. Harsh criticism of the government's failure to provide an adequate bait protection service in 1912, its constant pleas for government to take action on standards in the fishery, along with other outstanding concerns, began to prove an embarrassment to the government. By 1915, the Morris-Board of Trade honeymoon was over. By then, its recommendations received only curt acknowledgments from the Premier.

The period from 1910 to 1915 was prosperous. In 1910, fish prices rebounded from the downturns of 1907-08 and 1908-09. In 1909, average fish prices stood around \$4.27 per quintal. Six years later, in 1915, average fish prices stood at \$6.70 per quintal, a 157% increase.

(Calculated from Table 2-1.) Generally, a short catch and increased demand in the markets tended to contribute to higher demand for Newfoundland fish. In 1912, for example, the Board of Trade indicated that a short catch in Nova Scotia, the purchase of green fish by Gloucester firms, and short supplies of French lavé fish were the root cause of Newfoundland's prosperity.<sup>3</sup> The economy also benefitted from substantial employment provided the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company (AND), the British-Newfoundland Syndicate (Albert Reed Company)<sup>4</sup>, the Bell Island mines, and through local manufacturing.<sup>5</sup> In January 1912, the Board reported that some 2,000 men were directly employed by the AND Company, along with some 100 to 200 men in the loading of the ships. This happy circumstance, it was proud to report, injected approximately \$900,000 a year in wages.<sup>6</sup> The Board was simply overwhelmed with Newfoundland's good fortune:

Newfoundland has experienced for the past two or three years, and is still experiencing, a period of great prosperity. It would almost seem as if all nature had conspired this year to make Newfoundland the one place of all cod-producing countries where success should attend the efforts of the people.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Newfoundland Board of Trade, Third Annual Report of the Newfoundland Board of Trade (St. John's: Chronicle Print, 1912), 8-9.

<sup>4</sup>Contemporary sources referred to the British-Newfoundland Syndicate as the Albert Reed Company.

<sup>5</sup>Third Annual Report (1912), 29.

<sup>6</sup>Third Annual Report (1912), 37.

<sup>7</sup>Third Annual Report (1912), 36.

The following year, the Board reported that "the labouring classes have been able to find employment during the whole of the year," with good rates of wages.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, some lumber and transport companies had even reported a labour shortage. The Board noted a rare occurrence--immigration had exceeded emigration during the previous year.<sup>9</sup> The Council went so far as to suggest that government take measures to encourage further immigration. "The time is opportune to suggest to the Government the advisability of making special efforts in Great Britain, Ireland and other countries to induce desirable emigrants to settle in the Colony."<sup>10</sup> Prosperity engendered high optimism for the future. And while enormous problems still plagued the fishery, the economy in general, and the fishery in particular, appeared quite satisfactory.

Left to its own devices following government's refusal to grant wider legislative powers to regulate the fishery, the Board launched a number of practical measures to improve the fishery, including the distribution of outport circulars to inform fishers about proper curing

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<sup>8</sup>Reprint of "Fourth Annual Report of the Newfoundland Board of Trade," in Daily News, 21 January 1913, 5.

<sup>9</sup>For a discussion of Newfoundland migration patterns see Reeves, "Our Yankee Cousins," chapter 9, 449-519.

<sup>10</sup>Daily News, 21 January 1913, 5. In his 1913 Budget Speech, Minister of Finance and Customs, Michael Cashin, echoed the Board's Annual Report by quoting it extensively. Daily News, 1 April 1913, 1; and "Budget Speech of Hon. M.P. Cashin, Minister of Finance and Customs, 1913," Journal of the House of Assembly, 1913, 274-318, especially 295-6.

methods, the continuation of its voluntary inspection service and the promotion of local manufacturing, including championing the work of several innovative local fish manufacturers during the 1910 Manufacturers-Agricultural Exhibition. Despite laudable efforts, the fishery measures had only limited success. The inspection service, while generally applauded as a useful measure to stem the tide of foreign reclamations, did not become widespread, while the information circulars fell on deaf ears. Its modest measures could not transform the inadequacies of a rapidly deteriorating fishery. By January 1914, the Board had to admit that standards in the fishery would be a much more difficult proposition to bring about due to the widespread practice of buying talqual.

At its first quarterly meeting in 1910, the Board considered a report on the cure of fish. Repeated difficulties between buyers and sellers in the foreign markets were, in the Board's opinion, due primarily to the imperfections of the cure and the fishers' lack of attention to quality. The problem might be resolved if fishers focused their attention on the quality of their fish rather than striving to catch large quantities. If fishers did not improve their cure, the Board feared that Newfoundland fish "will only be consumed when the fish of other countries is not available."<sup>11</sup> Stressing the importance of cure, care and cleanliness, the Sub-committee Appointed to Consider Cure and Handling of Fish prepared a circular for distribution to the outports informing

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<sup>11</sup>Evening Telegram, 12 April 1910, 4.

fishers and outport merchants on the proper methods of preparing fish.<sup>12</sup> (See Appendix 3: Newfoundland Board of Trade Circular on the Curing of Fish.<sup>13</sup>) As many fishers could not read, Munn and Gosling proposed the distribution of a calendar with "the most important directions for the proper cure of fish together with the suggested photographs." This, as well, was adopted by the Board.<sup>14</sup> The Board also prepared circulars on the proper method of preparing split herring, and on how to eliminate spoilage in the holds of vessels.<sup>15</sup> (See Appendix 4: Newfoundland Board of Trade Split Herring Circular.<sup>16</sup>) Both the codfish and split herring circulars gave detailed, specific instructions regarding the proper method of splitting, salting, washing, spreading, handling, cleaning and packing of cod and herring. If implemented on a widespread scale, the cure would no doubt have improved.

It is doubtful whether the Board's circulars had much influence, or induced fishers to alter long-held customs. Similar circulars had for the most part fallen on deaf ears. In 1914, Richard J. Devereaux, MHA for

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<sup>12</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 22 April 1910 meeting, 139.

<sup>13</sup>"Report of Sub-committee appointed to consider cure and handling of fish," (2 pages), "Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 22 April 1910 meeting, 139.

<sup>14</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 13 May 1910 meeting, 145.

<sup>15</sup>"Minute Book, November 1910 - March 1914," Newfoundland Board of Trade, PANL, MG73, Box #71, (5/A1,82), 2 June 1911 meeting, insert. (Hereafter cited as "Board of Trade Minute Book #2.")

<sup>16</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #2," 2 June 1911 meeting, insert.

Placentia and St. Mary's, indicated that in 1895 in the wake of the bank crash, circulars were distributed to fishers requesting better care in the preparation of fish; little had resulted because fishers had no monetary incentive to produce a better cure:

The fishermen could not have put up their fish in a better way and when they brought it on to St. John's in the fall they expected very naturally to receive fifty cents or a dollar more than those who did not make it and since that time [the fishermen] will laugh at you if you suggest that they put it up better because of the way in which the merchants treated the fishermen in that year. What encouragement have the fishermen received ever since to make better fish? None whatever.<sup>17</sup>

The mere promise of higher rewards may not have been sufficient to induce fishers to produce a better quality of fish or dissuade many from catching large quantities. The Board's circulars in all probability fell on deaf ears with many fishers simply scoffing at the impertinence of this latest round of merchant circulars. Later, in 1918, George C. Fearn argued "it was useless to print pamphlets." Education on the matter of cure should be encouraged by personal contact.<sup>18</sup>

The Board of Trade's voluntary inspection service was, it admitted, "the next best thing to having standards for local transactions."<sup>19</sup> The service was initially confined to St. John's, but by 1913, an occasional

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<sup>17</sup>Daily News, 9 May 1914, 10.

<sup>18</sup>Evening Telegram, 5 February 1918, 3.

<sup>19</sup>Newfoundland Board of Trade, Fifth Annual Report of the Newfoundland Board of Trade. (St. John's: J.W. Withers, King's Printer, 1914), 7.

inspector was sent to the outports.<sup>20</sup> On 11 April 1910, the Board stated that foreign buyers had mostly accepted the grading of the inspected fish and had often commended the quality.<sup>21</sup> In January 1912 the Board reported that inspected fish has "almost invariably given satisfaction to the buyers," and in a number of instances buyers had even stipulated Board inspection to ensure quality. To further the service, a second inspector, N. Callahan was hired to assist Thomas Mundy during the busy season.<sup>22</sup> The fish inspection service also met with "marked success" the following year.<sup>23</sup> By January 1914, however, the Board lamented that the service was not widely used, and had been largely circumvented by the sending of large consignments to the market. This caused an overstock of the markets and stopped outright sales to foreign merchants.<sup>24</sup>

During late spring and summer of 1910, the Board of Trade and the Manufacturers' Association (which by then had been incorporated with the larger Board), focused its energies on the planning of an autumn

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<sup>20</sup>Daily News, 21 January 1913, 5.

<sup>21</sup>Evening Telegram, 12 April 1910, 4.

<sup>22</sup>Third Annual Report (1912), 14-5.

<sup>23</sup>Reprint of "Fourth Annual Report of the Newfoundland Board of Trade." in Daily News, 21 January 1913, 5; and Evening Telegram, 18 April 1913, 4.

<sup>24</sup>Fifth Annual Report (1914), 7.

exhibition of local manufactures.<sup>25</sup> It was hoped that the display and promotion of locally-produced goods would not only stimulate demand for domestic industrial manufactures, but spur local employment. Following numerous meetings with the government it was finally agreed to stage a six-day combined Manufacturers' Fair and Agricultural Exhibition, from 31 October to 5 November.<sup>26</sup>

The combined Manufacturers-Agricultural exhibition opened on 31 October 1910 with an address from Governor Sir Ralph Williams.<sup>27</sup> By all accounts, the exhibition was an unqualified success and featured many of Newfoundland's leading producers of manufactured goods.<sup>28</sup> The promotion

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<sup>25</sup>Daily News, 12 May 1910, 5; 2 June 1910, 1; 18 June 1910, 7; 30 June 1910, 4; and Evening Telegram, 12 May 1910, 5; 2 June 1910, 4

<sup>26</sup>Daily News, 13 July 1910, 1, and 14 July 1910, 1. See also Daily News, 12 July 1910, 1; 20 July 1910, 1; 26 September 1910, 1; 27 September 1910, 5; 24 October 1910, 1; and 25 October 1910, 1. It was agreed that the Manufacturers' Fair would be staged at the Prince's Rink, while the Agricultural Exhibition would be held at the Curling Rink.

<sup>27</sup>Daily News, 1 November 1910, 6. Governor Williams' address was followed speeches from Hon. Sydney Blandford, Minister of Agriculture; John Browning, Vice-President of the Manufacturers' Committee of Management; J.H. Monroe; and Sir Edward Morris. See also the Daily News editorial commenting on Browning's address and the seeming prejudice against local manufacturers, 1 November 1910, 4.

<sup>28</sup>Some of the businesses participating were: Imperial Tobacco Company, Royal Stores Limited, Newfoundland Timber and Minerals, Anglo-Newfoundland Development Co., Mark Chaplin, T. McMurdo & Co., Gaden's Aerated Waters, G. Browning & Sons, Harbor Grace Boot and Shoe, Angel Engineering and Supply Co., Ltd., St. John's Nail Manufacturing Co., Rennie's River Tannery, W. F. Kenny, F. McNamara, Sudbury Waterproof Seal and Leather Manufacturing Co., Mercantile Cooperage, Game and Fisheries Board, The Clouston Exhibit, Marine and Fisheries Department, Board of Trade, St. John Ambulance Association, A. Samuelson, W.J. Ellis, Manual Training, along with a feature exhibit of Grand Falls. Daily News, 3 November 1910, 5 and 4 November 1910, 4.

of home industries was "an object lesson, and must dispel for all time the erstwhile, erroneous idea, that Newfoundland could not compete with foreign manufactures."<sup>29</sup> The Board of Trade's system of inspection and its "Standard Cask" exhibit--featuring codfish and herring drums and half drums clearly stamped and numbered, with the name of the shipper--was applauded as a great advance and "the key to unlock the most remunerative markets."<sup>30</sup> A.W. Piccott's 1910 Fishery Report, as well, commended the fishery exhibits: "Not only were the general public astonished at the pleasing appearance of the various articles, but the fact was brought home by ocular [sic] demonstration that such processes are actually being carried out in St. John's and the outports by Newfoundlanders themselves."<sup>31</sup> High praise was accorded to both George Fearn's exhibit and the Board's inspection service:

The improvement on the ordinary shore cured Merchantable, exhibited by Messrs. Fearn under the Board of Trade requirements, was most noticeable. If the Board carries out this policy it will be a step in the right direction and conducive to better results in the markets of the Mediterranean.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Daily News, 7 November 1910, 1.

<sup>30</sup>Daily News, 4 November 1910, 4.

<sup>31</sup>"Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the Year 1910," Journal of the House of Assembly, 1911 (St. John's: Evening Chronicle, 1911), 432.

<sup>32</sup>"Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries, 1910," 432.

The Report paid particular interest to Chetwynd's<sup>33</sup> and Clouston's fish exhibits. John Clouston's large presentation featured the latest in production and packing methods. On display were shredded cod in both tins and cartons; boneless cod in 30 lb. boxes; stripped cod in 30 lb. boxes; codfish glue in casks and bottles, fish fertilizer in 100 lb. sacks; and a display of experimental fish skin leather. His display of smoked cod, in 30 and 100 pound boxes was, reported Piccott, "meeting with appreciation to such an extent that Mr. Clouston is unable to supply the demands in Canada and the United States," while his artificially cured cod "compared most favorably with the best sun-dried article."<sup>34</sup> By the third day of the exhibition, an estimated 15,000 people had visited both locations, with a combined attendance of approximately 32,000.<sup>35</sup> By the

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<sup>33</sup>The exhibit featured a wide range of progressive fishery exhibits, including, George M. Barr's "Encore" brand of tinned lobster; W.P. Lake's smoked caplin; T.J. Edens' "Red Cross" brand tinned salmon; Newfoundland Fresh Fish Packing Company's tinned codfish steak; cartons of steam smoked caplin, from Codroy; H.J. Earle's "Dory" brand tinned cod steak; cartons of smoked caplin manufactured by E. Simmonds, Bristol's Hope; bottled mussels, manufactured by T.J. Dunn, Harbor Grace; W.A. Munn's cod liver oil; samples of whale, seal and cod oils manufactured by Job Bros. & Co; seal skin leather by Thompson's process; cod roes, properly packed, by Messrs. Fearn along with Labrador cured cod; Labrador herrings; samples of shore cured cod from the various districts; pickled salmon; Scotch cured herring, and the usual display of models, photographs, whale and seal exhibits. "Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries, 1910," 435.

<sup>34</sup>"Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries, 1910," 434.

<sup>35</sup>Daily News, 3 November 1910, 6.

close of the exhibition, total attendance had topped a reported 60,000.<sup>36</sup>

A subscriber to the Daily News was sure that positive results would follow:

The most practical form of patriotism is to encourage and patronize home industries of all kinds and keep as much money as possible circulating at home. The present exhibition is the best object lesson in that direction that we have had and it is quite worth all the trouble and expense which it has cost.<sup>37</sup>

In mid-October 1910, the Board presented its interim report on the progress of a number of matters that had transpired since January. While less extensive than its First Annual Report, the interim report nonetheless detailed a host of concerns, including, the continued unsatisfactory nature of government fishery statistics, the general improvement of the steamship service (including the announcement of the introduction of a new steamer in the following year, the S.S. Florizel); and among other concerns, the recent death of Arthur B. Dallas, their trade agent in Brazil.<sup>38</sup> Various aspects of the fishery, however, held the majority of the reports' attention.

The Board was deeply concerned, in light of the recent failure of the Labrador fishery, that steam trawling should be regulated so as not to

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<sup>36</sup>Daily News, 7 November 1910, 1.

<sup>37</sup>Letter to editor dated 2 November 1910, Daily News, 4 November 1910, 5.

<sup>38</sup>Daily News, 18 October 1910, 5. See also Evening Telegram, 18 October 1910, 3.

interfere with the trap fishery, but felt that it would be a very grave mistake for government to prohibit the use of trawls, which "is the most economical method of fishing."<sup>39</sup> The Board announced the recent appointment of George Hawes of Malaga as Trade Commissioner for Newfoundland for Spain for a period of two years.<sup>40</sup> The following year, on 18 August 1911, Hugh A. LeMessurier was appointed as the Trade Commissioner for Italy, Sicily and Greece.<sup>41</sup>

Hawes had visited Newfoundland in June and impressed upon the exporters the great need to improve the cure of fish, pointing out that while the French and Norwegians were making rapid strides in the cure of

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<sup>39</sup>Daily News, 18 October 1910, 5. See also, Board of Trade Minute Book #1, 22 October 1909, 22 April and 21 October 1910 meetings, 76, 138 and 161. See "Trawl Fishing" editorial, Daily News, 31 May 1910, 4. The FPU, on the other hand, was strongly opposed to any use of steam trawlers in the fishery and urged government to ban them. See reprint of letter to editor Evening Herald from W.F. Coaker, 20 November 1908 in Daily News, 23 November 1908, 4; and "Journal of Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Supreme Council of the Fishermen's Protective Union, held at Catalina, December 12th, 13th and 14th, 1910," in Hon. Sir W.F. Coaker, ed., Twenty Years of the Fishermen's Protective Union of Newfoundland. (Reprint) (St. John's: Creative Printers and Publishers Limited, 1984), 26.

<sup>40</sup>Daily News, 18 October 1910, 5. See "Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 25 February 1910 meeting, 121-22, and "Board of Trade Minute Book #2," 4 November 1910 meeting, 1.

<sup>41</sup>Board of Trade Minute Book #2, 7 July 1911 meeting, 64; and 25 August 1911 meeting, 72; and Third Annual Report (1912), 19. LeMessurier would remain in the position until the outbreak of the war when he volunteered for active service. He was replaced by G.T. Da Fonseca-Araujo, who had previously been a special agent co-operating with Hawes and LeMessurier. Third Annual Report (1912), 19; and Newfoundland Board of Trade, Seventh Annual Report of the Newfoundland Board of Trade. (St. John's: J.W. Withers, King's Printer, 1916), 7. The Seventh Annual Report is reprinted in Evening Telegram, 26 January 1916, 3.

fish, Newfoundland was "retrogressing." As far as Hawes was concerned, "it was not so much a question of obtaining new markets as retaining our old ones," and he was convinced that "we would certainly be driven right out of our present markets in Spain by the French and Norwegians unless we at once and seriously attend to the improvement of the cure."<sup>42</sup> Hawes' concern was also shared by John Rendell, a former agent for Job Brothers and Company and Bowring Brothers in Spain and Italy. Again, to encourage higher standards and care in the preparation of fish, a further circular was prepared for distribution to the fishermen of the Colony. "It is hoped that they will receive the suggestions in a kind spirit, as they are intended solely to benefit the individual fisherman and the Colony at large."<sup>43</sup>

Two weeks later, at its weekly meeting on 28 October, the Board discussed the deplorable state of the cod liver oil industry and recommended that government take immediate steps to engage a replacement for the late Mr. Adolph Neilsen to oversee the collection of scientific data on the fisheries.<sup>44</sup> The idea of establishing a Fishery Bureau "with

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<sup>42</sup>Daily News, 18 October 1910, 5.

<sup>43</sup>Daily News, 18 October 1910, 5.

<sup>44</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #1," 28 October 1910 meeting, 164; and "Board of Trade Minute Book #2," 11 November 1910 meeting, 3. Neilsen had been the superintendent of fisheries from 1888 to 1897. For Neilsen's previous activities, see Shannon Ryan, Fish Out of Water: The Newfoundland Saltfish Trade, 1814-1914. (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1986), 73; Keith W. Hewitt, "The Newfoundland Fishery and State Intervention in the Nineteenth Century: The Fisheries Commission, 1888-1893," Newfoundland Studies 9, 1 (Spring 1993), 58-80; and Melvin Baker, A.B. Dickinson, and

a properly qualified scientist in charge," was echoed in the 1910 Fishery Report which argued that "the lack of scientific data concerning the habits, propagation and migration of the cod is astounding in a country whose chief asset and constant boast is the revenue derived from its fisheries."<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the Report suggested, the Board of Trade and the government should co-operate and nominate their own representatives.<sup>46</sup> In December 1910, following the distribution of the Board's internal "Inspection of Cod Liver Oil Report,"<sup>47</sup> the Board recommended the appointment of a government inspector with Board of Trade approval to combat deficiencies in the cod liver oil industry. His duties should include visiting:

...the manufactures in the outports, and to instruct them as to the best means of obtaining the best results...Many of the factories are in a very dirty and unhygienic condition; that the livers are badly washed, the gall bags, in many cases, not removed, and worst of all liver is kept over from one day to another, before being manufactured...The arguments to be used in favour of this are very numerous, amongst them may be mentioned the fact that the export of this article at present, is almost nothing, when compared with that of Norway, and that if foreign markets are allowed to be flooded with inferior manufactures which will be marketed as Cod Liver Oil, it

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C.W. Sanger, "The Newfoundland Fishery and State Intervention in the Nineteenth Century: The Fisheries Commission, 1888-1893," Newfoundland Quarterly LXXXVII, 2 (Spring 1992), 25-32, 35.

<sup>45</sup>"Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the Year 1910," 435.

<sup>46</sup>"Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the Year 1910," 436.

<sup>47</sup>"Inspection of Cod Liver Oil Report," (30 November 1910), "Board of Trade Minute Book #2," 13; and Third Annual Report (1912), 14.

cannot fail to have a most unfavourable effect, and keep the Newfoundland oil, where it is at present, in the ditch.<sup>48</sup>

Soon thereafter the government appointed M.B. Simonsen [Siemunsen], a cod liver oil manufacturer from Lofoden Island, Norway, as its cod liver oil inspector.<sup>49</sup> However, the situation in the cod liver oil trade continued to deteriorate over the course of the following year. In September 1911, the Board demanded Simonsen's re-engagement as the "Inspector of Inspectors" and requested stricter government controls of the factories.<sup>50</sup> To offset Simonsen's salary, the Board indicated that it would contribute \$400.00 towards his annual \$1,200.00 salary.<sup>51</sup> Morris, assuring the Board of "his desire to help," thought that "moral suasion" was better than fishery laws and was not amenable to Simonsen's

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<sup>48</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #2," 9 December 1910 meeting, 13.

<sup>49</sup>Daily News, 5 August 1911, 4; see also "Norway Fisheries - Report to Piccott from M.B. Simonsen, 30 December 1911." Journal of the House of Assembly, 1912, 511-5.

<sup>50</sup>Specifically, the Board recommended that "Cod Liver Oil factories should be placed under licensing laws similar to those in operation in reference to lobsters. That Mr. Simonsen should inspect factories and see that they have suitable machinery and are fitted up in a hygienic manner before such licenses shall be granted. That he have power whenever he finds the factories unsuitable, the machinery inefficient, or the manufacture of cod liver oil unsatisfactory to suspend, or if necessary close such factories until the defects are remedied. It is also very advisable that legislation should be enacted to give the Board of Trade power to inspect Cod Liver Oil on grades to be standardized by them. All matters affecting the quality of livers to be used, the cleanliness, and the maintenance of factories, and the manner and method of producing Cod Liver Oil to be subject to such rules as Mr. Simonsen may make approved by the Board." "Board of Trade Minute Book #2," 22 September 1911 meeting, 76-7.

<sup>51</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #2," 22 September 1911 meeting, 76-77.

further appointment,<sup>52</sup>--this, despite A.H. Murray's further pledge of the sum of \$100.00 to defray the cost of Simonsen's salary.<sup>53</sup>

Although the Board had achieved a small measure of success in convincing the government to establish trade agents, its continued request for an adequate system of fishery statistics went unheeded, despite Morris' initial agreement with the Board on its usefulness.<sup>54</sup> The problem appears to have been chiefly the fault of apathy on the part of outpost customs officials, who through a "lack of interest, or neglect of duty," failed to make accurate returns to the Assistant Collector of Customs.<sup>55</sup> By May 1911, in the absence of any directive from the government, the Board decided to establish its own system of data collection by asking some 150 island correspondents to provide weekly information on the progress of the fishery.<sup>56</sup> The Board's efforts to collect statistics over the next year produced mixed results; returns in many cases were found unreliable with fishers often refusing to give particulars on their catch.

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<sup>52</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #2," 3 November 1911 meeting, 85.

<sup>53</sup>"Board of Trade Minute Book #2," 1 December 1911 meeting, 91. Apparently Simonsen continued his work until 1914. Melvin Baker and Shannon Ryan, "The Newfoundland Fishery Research Commission, 1930-1934." James E. Candow and Carol Corbin, eds., How Deep Is the Ocean?: Historical Essays on Canada's Atlantic Fishery. (Sydney: University of Cape Breton Press, 1997), 161.

<sup>54</sup>Daily News, 12 June 1909, 6.

<sup>55</sup>Daily News, 18 October 1910, 5.

<sup>56</sup>Daily News, 4 May 1911, 4.

Unreliable information, the Board lamented, created suspicion among buyers and sellers:

That the suppression of these facts is very much against the realization of satisfactory prices, cannot be doubted, and if this course is pursued in the future, suspicion will be created in the minds of the buyers of fish which will make them very loath to purchase, and the producers may find themselves in the fall of the year, when the catch is rushed to the market, with a very heavy collapse in prices which might, with accurate information as to the catch, have been avoided. Governments of such progressive countries as Norway and France do not hesitate to publish statistics of their fisheries to the great advantage of the producers, and it is very regrettable indeed that the efforts of the Council to, in some degree, obtain statistics of the Newfoundland fishery, have been thwarted.<sup>57</sup>

In March 1912, the Board admitted that its attempts to collect and tabulate fishery statistics had failed, concluding that "the work can only be properly performed by an official of the Government especially detailed for the purpose." Soon afterwards, the Board sent a list of statistics to the government requesting the hiring of a statistical clerk to collect and tabulate the data.<sup>58</sup>

In November, the Board reported, that "by dint of persistent agitation," the Assistant Collector of Customs had finally provided the Board with a set of statistics on the Labrador, Bank, and Shore fisheries. While useful, the statistics were woefully inadequate; some customs officers had again failed to send in their reports while others simply

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<sup>57</sup>Third Annual Report (1912), 16.

<sup>58</sup>Daily News, 9 April 1912, 5.

neglected their duties. Statistics on the Bank fishery, in particular, while the easiest to obtain, "have been almost entirely neglected. Customs Officers in some of the most important centres of the Bank Fishery have made no reports at all, and consequently no statistics of any value have been obtained."<sup>59</sup> There was little improvement in 1913. In February 1914 Morris admitted that outpost officials had been lax in their duties:

There is no reason why an official should not give us these statistics of the catch. Every boat which fishes in this country should be licensed and numbered and the owners should be compelled by law to report each day's catch of fish. During the fishing season in Norway, the catch of fish is cabled out here each week. The people of Norway know just how much fish they will have to dispose of at the end of the season and they regulate the price accordingly. There is no reason why we should not do the same thing in this country. There are lots of Government officials in every settlement who have nothing to do half the time, and they could be made to do this work.<sup>60</sup>

Fishery statistics remained unsatisfactory by the time of the Board's Seventh Annual Meeting in January 1916. Again, indifference on the part of outpost Customs officials were the chief problem. "It has been found impossible to get a regular weekly return from the most important places; some officers who formerly gave weekly returns have from some cause or other discontinued, and others contend that it is no part of their duties."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Daily News, 4 November 1912, 2; and Evening Telegram, 1 November 1912, 4.

<sup>60</sup>Daily News, 9 May 1914, 9. (House of Assembly, 19 February 1914). See also Evening Telegram, 20 February 1914, 4.

<sup>61</sup>Seventh Annual Report (1916), 4.

The problems associated with inferior standards occupied the Board's repeated attention throughout the period. In its Second Annual Report in January 1911--a report which the Daily News reviewed<sup>62</sup> as "optimistic, without being extravagant; and advisory without being dictatorial"-- the Council noted with "extreme regret," that there was no improvement in the cure of fish, and "it is difficult to obtain fish of a class suitable for the best European markets." Repeated warnings by the Board concerning the inferior quality of dried fish, if unheeded, "will lead to disastrous results, as it has often done before."<sup>63</sup> In May 1911 at the Quarterly Meeting of the Board of Trade, the Council questioned whether the fisheries were being pursued economically. The answer, was a categorical no:

The curing of the fish is attended with as many drawbacks as the catching of it. Poor stages, insufficient flake room, lack of help, are consequent upon the present individual methods, and badly cured fish too often results. This is all disastrously uneconomical. We are in the hand-loom stage, as regards our great fishery.<sup>64</sup>

The same was true of the bank fishery; even though it was better managed than other parts of the fishery:

Our methods of handling codfish require to be revised at almost every stage...It should be remembered that codfish is intended for human food, and every precaution should be taken to protect it from contamination...We provide human food on a

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<sup>62</sup>Daily News, 17 January 1911, 4.

<sup>63</sup>Daily News, 17 January 1911, 4. See also Evening Telegram, 17 January 1911, 7.

<sup>64</sup>Daily News, 4 May 1911, 4.

large scale, and it is our duty as well as our self-interest, to see that it is clean and wholesome. The fisheries of Newfoundland are capable of great expansion, but to make the most of them, a radical change in our methods is necessary. Merchant and fisherman must look to it.<sup>65</sup>

In July 1911, at the next Quarterly Meeting of the Board of Trade, the Council reported heavy advances in the markets from foreign competitors against Newfoundland's inferior cure. Citing a 24 May 1911 letter received from Messrs. Lind and Couto, of Oporto, Portugal, the Council again admonished both merchant and fisher, and warned of the serious consequences of inaction:

Owing to its high price demand for Newfoundland cure continues very slack, dealers giving preference to Norwegian, Iceland and German cures which, being much cheaper, are more easily disposed of. Our market is now constantly receiving supplies of these qualities and the fish being well cured, dry and clean, is slowly, but surely, displacing Newfoundland cure in this market. Large quantities of Norwegian are now on passage to this market and, demand being insufficient to keep pace with the supply, stocks will accumulate and prices must inevitably come down.<sup>66</sup>

George Hawes, the Board's recently-appointed Spanish trade agent, who attended the meeting, was similarly critical of the cure of fish, especially from Labrador. "Spain would not haggle over the price if only she could get the quality," and appealed for uniformity of size and cure. "Unless certain changes were made, in a few years the Labrador market would be of the past."<sup>67</sup> In August 1911, in response to the problems of

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<sup>65</sup>Daily News, 4 May 1911, 4.

<sup>66</sup>Daily News, 21 July 1911, 4.

<sup>67</sup>Daily News, 21 July 1911, 5.

cure and cull, the Board issued a circular to the trade urging the use of sworn cullers so that the various qualities of fish could be standardized:

So long as cullers, sworn or unsworn, are the paid servants of the buyers, no matter how just and fair their cull, the seller will have no confidence in it...An unsworn culler may be as honest of day, but if he holds a retainer from either side, impartiality becomes also impossible.<sup>68</sup>

The question of government action on fishery reforms, although holding the attention of the Board over the next few years, would not be successfully resolved; the cure of fish would continue to deteriorate. During 1911, the Board reported that the continued practice of buying talqual and fishers' indifference to quality had left the cure of codfish "very much to be desired." It was long past the time for government action to stem the tide of further deterioration:

That the method of buying fish talqual has much to do with the decline in the good cure of fish, cannot be questioned, since it does not differentiate between the fish which is of good quality, the result of great care and labor, and that which is indifferently attended to. It seems as if some drastic measure were necessary, not only to enable the man who cures his fish well to obtain adequate remuneration for his labor, but also for the sake of the Colony's welfare, and apart from the suggestions above-mentioned, it would seem that a system of inspection to be established throughout the Colony by the Government (the carrying out of which should be delegated to some independent body entirely outside the pale of political influence) might achieve the result, and so improve the prices of fish, benefitting at once the fisherman, the Colony and the consumer.<sup>69</sup>

In 1913, the Board was lamenting the widespread practice of buying talqual

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<sup>68</sup>Daily News, 30 August 1911, 4.

<sup>69</sup>Third Annual Report (1912), 17-8.

and admitted defeat:

When the Board was founded five years ago, this [standardization] was the chief matter which occupied the attention of the organizing committee, and in the Act of Incorporation submitted to the Government of the day, powers were asked for, which if granted, would have enabled the Board of Trade to establish a desirable method for the buying and selling of fish. It was the belief of the organizing committee that the Board of Trade would comprise representatives of all classes--fishermen, tradesmen and labourers, as well as the commercial classes, and that a fair and unvarying practice in the purchase and sale of our commodity could be arrived at by mutual consent, and maintained by the authority of the Board under the Act of Incorporation. But as the Board was refused the power to deal with the question, it has been able to do very little to check the tendency of the present methods of buying and selling to cause a steady deterioration in the cure of our great staple.<sup>70</sup>

By 1914, the Board had all but abandoned hope for government action on the matter, and "now only make the comment that the problem has not as yet been dealt with, and begs to express the hope of seeing that all political parties are agreed upon the importance of the matter that it may be dealt with promptly in a 'Non-party' spirit, with a view to its solution."<sup>71</sup> The following month, the government finally took action and appointed a select committee to look into the question of establishing standards.<sup>72</sup> Shortly thereafter, a commission of enquiry was appointed to continue the select committee's work. In its next annual report in 1916, the Board

<sup>70</sup>Fifth Annual Report (1914), 6-7.

<sup>71</sup>Newfoundland Board of Trade, Sixth Annual Report of the Newfoundland Board of Trade. (St. John's: J.W. Withers, King's Printer, 1914), 9-10.

<sup>72</sup>Daily News, 30 April 1914, 12. (House of Assembly, 13 February 1914). See also Evening Telegram, 17 February 1914, 7.

ceased its complaints about government inaction, but made little comment about the commission's work. Instead, the report reprinted highlights of the commission's recommendations.<sup>73</sup>

It is uncertain why the government waited so long to take action on the matter. Initially, A.W. Piccott attempted to gain some information on the question by holding a series of meetings with fishers in St. John's in October 1911.<sup>74</sup> But little immediate action resulted. On 6 October 1911, the Department of Marine and Fisheries distributed a circular to the schooners docked in St. John's requesting fishermen attend a series of meetings at the British Hall on the successive Saturday evenings of 7, 14, 21, and 28 October to discuss the question of standards in the fishery. Piccott, claiming that "no individual or combined action has been taken either by the fishermen or the purchasers of fish for the improvement of the system," indicated that the information which the fishermen provided at the meetings would form the basis of much-needed government legislation.<sup>75</sup>

Accusations regarding the cull and prices paid for fish were profuse during the first meeting, with "fishermen claiming that they were unjustly treated by the merchants, and the latter maintaining that they always did

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<sup>73</sup>Seventh Annual Report (1916), 11.

<sup>74</sup>Daily News, 7 October 1911, 4; 9 October 1911, 1; 16 October 1911, 1; and 23 October 1911, 1.

<sup>75</sup>Daily News, 7 October 1911, 4.

their best as to paying the highest price possible."<sup>76</sup> "Let these claims go for what they are worth," Piccott declared:

There is discontent over the culling, and the Government had decided to get the opinions of those interested so as to arrive, if possible, at some arrangement, which would prove satisfactory to buyers and sellers alike. The ideas of the fishermen would help the Government to legislate in the matter and improve conditions, so that all would receive a fair and square deal.<sup>77</sup>

Most of those who attended the meetings agreed that the "old system of culling should be abolished," and that a fixed regular standard with three standardized grades of fish (No. 1, 2 and 3 of large, medium and small), should be established by the government. As well, it should appoint and fund a system of independent cullers.<sup>78</sup> While Piccott's meetings were generally praised by the community,<sup>79</sup> there was no immediate legislative action. "I do not think there have been any practical result derived from those meetings as the same condition of affairs exist today that existed years ago," Liberal James M. Kent argued in the House of Assembly on 25 March 1913.<sup>80</sup>

Piccott's October 1911 meetings remain rather suspect, and it is unclear why he chose this particular occasion to meet with the fishers in

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<sup>76</sup>Daily News, 9 October 1911, 1.

<sup>77</sup>Daily News, 9 October 1911, 1.

<sup>78</sup>Daily News, 16 October 1911, 1; and 23 October 1911, 1.

<sup>79</sup>Daily News, 10 October 1911, 4.

<sup>80</sup>Daily News, 23 April 1913, 8. (House of Assembly, 25 March 1913.)

St. John's. The meetings are all the more curious as the Board of Trade and the FPU had been pressing the government for immediate action on the matter.<sup>81</sup> As many fishers felt a deep distrust of merchants and by implication, the Board of Trade, Piccott may have attempting to steer a middle ground between the two to form some consensus on the matter. Piccott may have been grasping at straws in an effort to come to some agreement on the standards issue. On the other hand, he may have been pandering to an ever-watchful electorate. Certainly, the meetings could do him no harm when it came election time.

It is quite possible that government did not know what to do, or how to bring about widespread reform. It preferred to muddle its way through until an opportune moment presented itself for a semblance of action. The general improvement of the economy may have bred complacency. The fishery, while displaying little improvement in cull and cure, had reached record price levels, despite its overwhelming inadequacies. Perhaps if the fishery downturns of 1907-08 and 1908-09 had continued, the government's response could well have been different and more immediate. In the debate leading up to the appointment of the select committee in February 1914, R. J. Devereaux, member for Placentia and St. Mary's, indicted that high fish prices in the past few years had indeed played a

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<sup>81</sup>At its First Annual Meeting, the FPU submitted a lengthy memorial to the government detailing its suggestions on the subjects of inspection, cullers, trade agents, and cold storage. "Journal of Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the Supreme Council of the Fishermen's Protective Union, held in the S.U.F. Hall at Change Islands, October 29th, November 1st, 2nd and 3rd, 1909," Coaker, ed., Twenty Years, 7-13.

factor in government's slow response:

...the price has been so high every year that it was never thought necessary or wise to interfere with the manner in which fish was marketed. Previous to 1908, when we came into power, the price fluctuated between four and five dollars, but since we took control of the colony there has been a uniform price for fish, and there have been abnormal prices.<sup>87</sup>

Government may have felt that there was adequate time to bring about widespread reform. In the interim, more accessible means to improve the fishery could be realized.

The government's attempts to develop cold storage facilities is illustrative of its strategy to improve the character of the fishery without tackling the fundamental question of standards. Cold storage seemingly offered a technological means to control seasonal overproduction in the fisheries and provided a way to break into new North American markets. And while the Board played little part in the negotiations with the various foreign firms, it supported the government's efforts, and believed, like many others, that cold storage would revolutionize the fishery. The FPU, as well, strongly endorsed the establishment of a system of bait depots and cold storage facilities. However, the FPU maintained that neither foreign capital, nor the Board of Trade, should have any role in the ventures. Cold storage facilities, Coaker insisted, should be erected and maintained by the government, and staffed by public

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<sup>87</sup>Daily News, 9 May 1914, 10. (House of Assembly, 19 February 1914.)

officials from the Fishery department. The Board, the FPU maintained, should limit its role in the fishery solely to the direction of the exports of dry fish, and "should not be expected to undertake these improvements of itself."<sup>83</sup>

The passage of the Cold Storage Act in 1910 opened the way for potential foreign investors to develop cold storage facilities in Newfoundland.<sup>84</sup> There were, however, no takers. And while the government perhaps believed that its promise had been fully realized with the passage of the act, it soon discovered that the mere passage of legislation did not necessarily ensure that development would occur.<sup>85</sup>

In January 1911, Morris travelled to Washington and the New England states. At Washington, he met American officials to negotiate various

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<sup>83</sup>"Report of the Committee appointed to draft a memorial to the Government (30 October 1909)," Coaker, ed., Twenty Years, 11. The committee consisted of A.J. Hoff, W.[illiam] Lucas, W.[alter] Burke and James A. Parsons.

<sup>84</sup>"An Act Respecting Cold Storage," 10 Edward VII, Cap. 31. Acts of the General Assembly of Newfoundland, 1910, 130-2. The act's provisions authorized the government to guarantee an interest on investments of 5% (limited to a total capital investment of \$500,000) to any business establishing cold storage facilities and as a further incentive, admitted all plant machinery for the original installation of the plants duty free. The government also had the power to grant a subsidy of up to 30% of the cost of any cold storage plant (payable 15% on completion and 15% at end of its first year operating). For details of previous government attempts to establish cold storage facilities, see Reeves, "Our Yankee Cousins," 283-302.

<sup>85</sup>"The Government's Record - Promises and Performances - 24 out of 32 Promises Redeemed within a Year," Daily News, 29 March 1910, 5.

trade matters stemming from the 7 September 1910 decision of the Hague Arbitration<sup>86</sup>, including the free entry of fish into the United States.<sup>87</sup> In a further attempt to develop a system of cold storage facilities, he met with Charles N. Trefethen and Joseph W. Lord of Portland, Maine, to confirm their company's 27 December 1910 proposal to erect five cold storage plants in Newfoundland, each with a value of \$100,000. In addition, the company proposed to construct five smoke houses, five fish packing factories, two glue factories and two fertilizer plants, all within a five year period.<sup>88</sup> As an inducement for the company to locate in Newfoundland, the government passed an additional cold storage act. Similar to the provisions 1910 act, the government agreed to provide a payment of 1½ per annum on the company's investment, and further guaranteed a profit of 5%, limited to a capital investment of \$500,000.

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<sup>86</sup>For the particulars of the questions submitted to the Tribunal and relevant issues related to Newfoundland's position, see "North Atlantic Coast Fisheries Tribunal of Arbitration - Special Agreement for the Submission of Questions Relating to Fisheries on the North Atlantic Coast," Journal of the House of Assembly, 1911, 619-733; Daily News, 14 June 1910, 5; and William G. Gosling's background report, "The Anglo-American Fishery Case before the Hague Tribunal." (1910?) (Centre for Newfoundland Studies, MUN). See also Alan M. Fraser, "The Hague Arbitration," in R.A. MacKay, ed., Newfoundland: Economic, Diplomatic, and Strategic Studies. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1946), 400-10. For background material on French and American historical rights to the waters off Newfoundland, see Peter Neary, "The French and American Shore Questions as Factors in Newfoundland History," in James Hiller and Peter Neary, eds., Newfoundland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Essays in Interpretation. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 95-122.

<sup>87</sup>Daily News, 20 January 1911, 4; and 31 January 1911, 4.

<sup>88</sup>Daily News, 13 January 1911, 4.

In addition to the monetary incentives, the government granted land, access to timber and water for power, and admitted a number of articles necessary for the plants' construction duty-free.<sup>89</sup>

Returning from the United States a month later, Morris was immediately embroiled in a heated public controversy over the proposed contract. Bond and the Liberal opposition--although favouring measures to encourage the construction of cold storage plants--were adamantly opposed to the Trefethen and Lord contract. It would contravene the provisions of the Bait Act and the prohibition on the sale of bait fishes to outsiders, and the subsidy might handicap other fish handlers.<sup>90</sup> More importantly, the government might be liable for the payment of thousands of dollars on the proposed guarantee on investment.<sup>91</sup>

Morris insisted that the contract did not impinge on the Bait Act,

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<sup>89</sup>Such articles included: "all plant, machinery, implements, apparatus, and material necessary for the original installation of cold storage plants, smoke houses and factories, and for the extension of the same but not in substitution for old; ammonia for refrigerating purposes; vegetable oils for use in curing fish; tin metal for cans, and solder; gasoline engines; gasoline; printed and lithographed labels; and mineral and lubricating oils for machinery." "An Act to Encourage the Establishment of Cold Storage Plants in this Colony," 1 George V, Cap. 23. Acts of the General Assembly of Newfoundland, 1911, 115-21.

<sup>90</sup>Evening Telegram, 11 February 1911, 4. See also Daily News, 15 February 1911, 4 for details of the contract and the report of the three hour debate between Morris and Bond in the House of Assembly.

<sup>91</sup>For Bond's lengthy speech on the cold storage agreement in the House of Assembly for 14 February, see Evening Telegram, 15 February 1911, 6. The correspondence between Morris and Trefethen and Lord is reprinted in Evening Telegram, 17 February 1911, 6. Additional coverage may be found in Evening Telegram, 21 February 1911, 6; 22 February 1911, 5; 23 February 1911, 6; and 28 February 1911, 4.

nor place the government in an adverse position regarding its guarantee on the company's investment. However, he needed an informed legal opinion. Morris wrote to William Gosling, then First Vice-President of the Board of Trade, requesting the Board's support. As far as Morris was concerned, "there is nothing in the agreement which can in any way restrict or affect, DIRECTLY or INDIRECTLY, the operations of the Bait Act," while the guarantee on investment would in "no case exceed the sum of \$25,000 in any year," as a result of the clause in Article 5 which limited the amount of the guarantee to a total capital investment of \$500,000. As Morris explained to Gosling:

...the total liability of the Colony shall only be 5 per cent. on \$500,000; otherwise the words "five hundred thousand dollars": would be meaningless. They are inserted as words of limitation. The Company may operate with a capital of five million dollars, but the liability of the Colony is only 5 per cent. on \$500,000. In other words, if they do a business of ten million dollars a year, and fail to make 5 per cent. on the capital invested, then the Colony has to pay 5 per cent. on the proportion of the \$500,000 so invested. In other words, if they make only 2½ per cent. on the cash capital invested, the Colony will have to pay 2½.<sup>92</sup>

Gosling and the Council were satisfied with Morris' explanation on the question of the government's limitation on the guarantee but unsure about whether the deal contravened the Bait Act. The Board referred the question to John Fenelon and James McGrath, two St. John's lawyers, for an

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<sup>92</sup>Morris to Gosling, 18 February 1911. Reprinted in Daily News, 28 February 1911, 4.

independent legal opinion.<sup>93</sup> Both reported favourably. Fenelon, in particular, was of the opinion that:

...in the form in which it has passed the House, does not give the Lessees or their assigns a shadow of right to claim exemption from the terms of the Bait Act while carrying on their business under the Agreement. THERE IS NOTHING IN THE BILL WHICH GIVES THEM EITHER EXPRESSLY OR BY IMPLICATION, THE RIGHT TO PURCHASE AND MARKET OTHERWISE THAN IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE EXISTING LAWS OF THE COLONY.<sup>94</sup>

The Board's intervention, along with Fenelon's and McGrath's legal opinions, were sufficient to allay the fears of the House. The bill passed on 29 March 1911, but controversy persisted over the next few years. Despite its passage and the optimism of Minister of Finance and Customs, Michael Cashin,<sup>95</sup> no cold storage plants were built by Trefethen and Lord.

It is unclear why the company reconsidered its Newfoundland project. Initially, they were interested, even going as far as to form a separate company, the United Fisheries Company of America.<sup>96</sup> But by February 1912,

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<sup>93</sup>Gosling to Morris, 24 February 1911. Reprinted in Daily News, 28 February 1911, 4.

<sup>94</sup>"Legal Opinion of John Fenelon, Esq., Barrister-At-Law," 25 February 1911. Reprinted in Daily News, 28 February 1911, 4.

<sup>95</sup>"Budget Speech by Hon. M.P. Cashin, Minister of Finance," Daily News, 31 March 1911, 6.

<sup>96</sup>Daily News, 12 June 1911, 4; 6 September 1911, 4; 6 May 1912, 1; and Third Annual Report (1912), 16-7.

it had become clear that Trefethen and Lord were having second thoughts.<sup>97</sup> By June 1912 the project had collapsed and Morris was off to Washington once more, this time to negotiate a deal with Booth Fisheries Company of Chicago to take over the Trefethen and Lord contract.<sup>98</sup> Even with government incentives, Trefethen and Lord may have found the project sufficiently uninviting, perhaps feeling that "they could put their half-million to better advantage elsewhere."<sup>99</sup> However, Morris later explained that one of the company's owners had fallen ill:

Unfortunately one of the principals of the Company went into an insane asylum. He was a man of very high character, a man who had occupied the position of mayor in his native city of Portland, and owing to his unfortunate illness the contract fell through.<sup>100</sup>

Despite a number of promising meetings, the Booth Fisheries project also collapsed.<sup>101</sup> Commenting on the Morris government's dismal failure to develop cold storage facilities, the Daily News saw but two options for the government: offer a more attractive guarantee to encourage foreign investment, or develop the facilities at its own expense. This latter solution, however, declared the News, would be a mistake. In a none too

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<sup>97</sup>Daily News, 17 February 1912, 3. (House of Assembly, 14 February 1912.)

<sup>98</sup>Daily News, 12 June 1912, 4 and 16 July 1912, 5.

<sup>99</sup>Daily News, 11 February 1913, 4.

<sup>100</sup>Daily News, 26 April 1913, 8. (House of Assembly, 25 March 1913.)

<sup>101</sup>Daily News, 12 June 1912, 4. See as well the editorial on Booth Fisheries Company, Daily News, 27 March 1913, 4.

veiled reference to the FPU, the News declared that this would "introduce the dangerous doctrine of Government ownership of commercial utilities--a suggestion that even the most pronounced Socialist will hesitate in approving."<sup>102</sup>

Undeterred by the failures of Trefethen and Lord and Booth Fisheries, the government arranged a deal with the Orr Newfoundland Company to construct five reduction plants for the manufacture of guano, fertilizer, glue and other fish products. Again, the government offered similar concessions to encourage development, but once more the project failed to get off the ground.<sup>103</sup>

The government, however, achieved a measure of success with an agreement with local entrepreneur John Clouston and his company, the Newfoundland-American Packing Company. Following the 1910 Manufacturers-Agricultural Exhibition, Clouston was given "carte blanche to lay-out and plan a model plant to be built at Bay Bulls, to mass-produce the fish food and by-products he was already making in his 'pilot' plant on a small scale and under great handicaps."<sup>104</sup> Again, similar concessions were offered to the company as an inducement to establish three cold storage

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<sup>102</sup>Daily News, 11 February 1913, 4.

<sup>103</sup>"An Act to Confirm an Agreement with the Orr Newfoundland Company Limited," 3 George V, Cap. 8. Acts of the General Assembly of Newfoundland, 1913, 49-53.

<sup>104</sup>A.B. Perlin, The Story of Newfoundland. Second printing. (St. John's: Guardian Limited, 1959), 186.

plants.<sup>105</sup> By 1916, a plant was operating at Bay Bulls. However, due to a difference of opinion on future policy, Clouston severed his connection with the project. Wartime difficulties eventually forced the plant's closure in 1920.<sup>106</sup>

Other than Clouston, two local companies, Harvey and Company and the Newfoundland Atlantic Fisheries, a subsidiary of the Reid-Newfoundland Company, established working bait and cold storage facilities. By 1915, Harvey and Company had erected a large bait freezer at Rose Blanche<sup>107</sup> to service the specific needs of the bank fishery.<sup>108</sup> In 1918, Newfoundland Atlantic Fisheries erected a modern refrigerating plant in St. John's with a storage capacity of some 6,000,000 pounds containing eight cold storage rooms equipped with five sharp-freezers. It is not known how long the Newfoundland Atlantic Fisheries plant operated. Although few cold storage facilities were ever established during this

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<sup>105</sup>"An Act for the Confirmation of a Contract with the Newfoundland-American Packing Company, Incorporated," 6 George V, Cap. 3. Acts of the General Assembly of Newfoundland, 1915, 10-9.

<sup>106</sup>The premises were later purchased by Harvey and Company. In the 1930s, the site operated as a fisheries research station. Baker and Ryan, "Newfoundland Fishery Research Commission," 166; and Perlin, Story of Newfoundland, 186.

<sup>107</sup>In 1913, the Gorton-Pew Company of Gloucester had purchased and shipped some 3,000 quintals of fish from Rose Blanche. Daily News, 25 April 1913, 5.

<sup>108</sup>Sixth Annual Report (1915), 7; Evening Telegram, 27 January 1915, 7; and "Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries, 1914," Journal of the House of Assembly, 1915. (St. John's: Chronicle Print, 1915), 542.

period, many still expressed belief in the possibilities. In 1922, ever the booster, Sir Edward Morris, by then Lord Morris of Waterford, maintained that Newfoundland's salvation lay in the establishment of a system of cold storage facilities.<sup>109</sup> His vision, however, would not be achieved until the late 1930s.<sup>110</sup>

It is unclear why the various cold storage schemes failed. Perhaps the government incentives were relatively unattractive. However, increasing sales of green fish (salt bulk) to a number of American firms from 1911 onwards, especially to Gloucester's Gorton-Pew Company, may have deterred many of the companies from committing substantial capital to Newfoundland. The companies could, without wasting valuable capital on the building of expensive facilities in Newfoundland, obtain salt bulk fish directly from Newfoundland's fishers.

Despite the continued setbacks in establishing cold storage facilities there was a certain measure of optimism expressed for the fishery, since the Gorton-Pew and Cunningham and Thompson companies--working in concert with each other--increased their purchases of large quantities of green fish (salt bulk) during 1911. The purchase of green

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<sup>109</sup>Lord Edward P. Morris, "Cold Storage in its Application to the Newfoundland Fisheries," *Newfoundland Quarterly*, XXII, 2 (October 1922), 30-1. Reprint of his article from *Ice and Cold Storage*, July 1922.

<sup>110</sup>Miriam C. Wright, "Newfoundland and Canada: The Evolution of Fisheries Development Policies, 1940-1966." (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1997), Chapter 2.

fish by the Americans, reported the Board in its Second Annual Report in January 1911, had increased in 1910 and was due to the "revised appraising of NEWFOUNDLAND FISH imported into UNITED STATES in AMERICAN BOTTOMS."<sup>111</sup> In May 1911, the Board of Trade had estimated that some 25,000 quintals had been exported to the U.S. market.<sup>112</sup> By late September, the two American companies proposed the construction of a fish collection plant at Placentia.<sup>113</sup> By the following month, the two companies had purchased some 50,000 pounds of salt bulk at an "average price of 3 cents a pound, or about \$6.30 dry," and had placed collecting agents at Bonne Bay, Bay of Islands, Wood's Island, Rose Blanche, Hr. Breton, St. Jacques, Placentia and Ferryland. The first schooner sailed from Argentia with 335,000 lbs. valued at \$10,080 and the companies were seeking more salt bulk. "I wish we could get 10,000,000 pounds of 'salt bulk', we'd find a market for it," declared one of the companies' unnamed agents. It was conservatively estimated that some 5,000,000 pounds, valued at \$150,000, would ship from the southwest coast to Gloucester before year's end.<sup>114</sup> The average price of approximately \$3.36 per quintal, wet, was on par with the reported \$6.60 talqual, dry, then offered in St. John's.<sup>115</sup> Selling salt

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<sup>111</sup>"Second Annual Report of the Newfoundland Board of Trade," "Board of Trade Minute Book #2," 6 January meeting, 17 (insert, 1).

<sup>112</sup>"Board of Trade Quarterly Meeting," Daily News, 4 May 1911, 4.

<sup>113</sup>Daily News, 25 September 1911, 1.

<sup>114</sup>Daily News, 24 October 1911, 1.

<sup>115</sup>Daily News, 31 October 1911, 1.

bulk fish to the Americans was sufficiently attractive for many fishers. Sales offered immediate cash and provided an additional incentive to need not further trouble with the arduous task of drying and curing.

For fishing communities like Petty Harbour, the infusion of some \$9,000 in cash from the sale of 30,000 pounds of salt bulk to Gorton-Pew meant an improvement in many fishers' economic circumstances. Moreover, such sales relieved the pressure on the remaining stocks of fish; "formerly the cod was heavily salted, and remained in bulk until spring, when it was 'washed out' and cured. It looks as if very little spring cured will be offered in the local market next year, if any."<sup>116</sup> By November 1911, 4,000,000 pounds of salt bulk was being prepared for transshipment to Gloucester on some eleven vessels and it was estimated that the total export would be closer to 7,000,000 pounds by the end of the season.<sup>117</sup> At the prices paid, this would have amounted to approximately \$200,000 in cash.<sup>118</sup>

The export of some 60,000 quintals of green fish (approximately 6,720,000 pounds), to the United States during 1911 had an extremely favourable affect on the fishery; cash was immediately injected into the outstretched hands of many fishers, while the sale of large quantities of fish forced higher market prices for the remaining stocks of dry-salted

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<sup>116</sup>Daily News, 26 October 1911, 6.

<sup>117</sup>Daily News, 11 November 1911, 1. Reprint of a report from Gloucester Times in Daily News, 23 December 1911, 1.

<sup>118</sup>Daily News, 23 December 1911, 1.

codfish.<sup>119</sup> The Department of Marine and Fisheries praised this happy innovation:

Hitherto this fish would have had to be made under great difficulties or held over to the Spring before being realized. This season, however, with the demand from the American markets, it was disposed of green, on a cash basis, thus giving the fishermen encouragement to prosecute the voyage for a longer period, prompt returns for their efforts, and ensuring a saving in labor, time and expense.<sup>120</sup>

The direct sale of green fish to the Americans would continue for the next number of years. In October 1912, Gorton-Pew had assigned the Alcona, a floating freezer, to the Bay of Islands to speed the collection, preparation and transshipment of fish to Gloucester.<sup>121</sup> This operation, however, was short-lived; it abruptly ceased in November 1913 when the Alcona was destroyed by fire while lying at Wood's Island.<sup>122</sup> Two years later, the Department reported "a marked increase in the export of green fish from the West Coast to Canada and the United States."<sup>123</sup> In January 1914, John Anderson estimated that in the four years between 1909-10 and 1912-13 some 181,000 quintals at approximately 3¼ cents per pound, or

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<sup>119</sup>"Marine & Fisheries - Extracts from the Report for 1911," Daily News, 20 June 1912, 3.

<sup>120</sup>"Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the Year 1911." Journal of the House of Assembly, 1912. (St. John's: Chronicle Print, 1912), 463.

<sup>121</sup>Daily News, 20 November 1912, 4.

<sup>122</sup>Daily News, 7 November 1913, 3.

<sup>123</sup>"Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the Year 1913" Journal of the House of Assembly, 1914. (St. John's: Chronicle Print, 1914), 530.

equal to \$7.50 per quintal, talqual, dry had been purchased by the Americans.<sup>124</sup> The Board of Trade in its Fifth Annual Report in January 1914 praised the continued sales to the Americans and had estimated that some 84,000 quintals had been shipped during the past six months, with sales estimated at \$305,000. "Not only is the business good in itself," declared the Report, "but it so reduces the quantity of Bank fish to be marketed in Europe, that the returns from the quarter should be more remunerative."<sup>125</sup> Although green fish sales to the Americans continued the following year, sales declined by some 34,000 quintals; dropping from 85,007 quintals to 50,972 quintals.<sup>126</sup>

Few disagreed with the idea of selling green fish to the American firms; the government, the Board of Trade, and the FPU were all satisfied with this fortuitous state of affairs. Indeed, William Coaker went so far as to advocate the return of American buyers every year:

It is the one bright spot of the past year's transaction, and I trust every effort will be made to encourage those buyers to return, by doing all we possibly can to put up the grade of fish they seek, and to facilitate them in their operations. The future of the Colony depends upon the sale of green fish in bulk, and I hope the whole fall's catch will be purchased green before five years pass away.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup>Daily News, 31 January 1914, 7.

<sup>125</sup>Fifth Annual Report, (1914), 10.

<sup>126</sup>Sixth Annual Report, (1915), 8.

<sup>127</sup>"Journal of Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the Supreme Council of the Fishermen's Protective Union, held at Greenspond, November 27th, 29th, 30th and 31st, 1911," in Coaker, ed., Twenty Years, 33.

Despite the widespread optimism, the sale of green fish to companies like Gorton-Pew may have undermined the government's plans for the development of cold storage facilities. While the sales tended to relieve the short-term seasonal pressures of production by creating an artificial market shortage, it otherwise provided Newfoundland's American rivals with a cheap and ready supply of unprocessed fish with a minimal outlay of capital. Morris' grand scheme for a system of cold storage facilities failed, a situation which the Liberal Evening Telegram took great delight:

Several bait depots were to be placed around our shores, where the fishermen could procure bait at any season, and a huge floating depot -- which Mr. Cashin described with minute detail -- was to supplement these stationary depots. Where are they? In the womb of the future, where the rest of Morris's promises in connection with the fishery are. The fishermen are still waiting for improved transportation to the foreign markets; for the new markets to be opened up; for bait depots and cold storage. Not even one of 37 ways in which Morris was going have fish put up has materialized. It is still manufactured and marketed in the way our forefathers did a hundred, nay two hundred years ago.<sup>128</sup>

Despite the seeming advances made in the fishery through the sale of green fish to the United States, standards of codfish cull and cure continued to suffer throughout the period. The necessity for a standardization cull of fish was, if anything, more in evidence during the 1910 fishing season than ever before. That year Piccott reported, "matters in connection with the fishery exports and products have reached

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<sup>128</sup> "Morris's Fishery Policy - Made Up of Fakes, Failures and Broken Promises," Evening Telegram, 11 March 1913, 4.

such a condition that it is a case of "Wake up, Newfoundland!" Retention of its existing salt cod markets, rather than the opening up of new markets should be the goal of the trade, he insisted:

Other competitors are beating the Newfoundland article by their improved methods, better handling, intelligent and intimate business relations with the purchasers, and their anxiety to please the customer in every way... when exposed for sale [side] by side with these competitors, it cannot compare in looks, and while it may be a better food, the most attractive article gains the day. The Newfoundland trade know this, yet no attempt has been made to compete in this way. No extra investment on their part would be necessary. At this end the faults of the cure, and the production of an article which might easily be better, are practically of their own creating, and are maintained by their own actions.<sup>129</sup>

While noting that the Government "has been willing and has demonstrated in various ways its desire to assist practically the development and exploitation of the products of the fisheries," the Report pinned the blame solely on "the old conservative methods," and the competitive nature of the trade. It would "require to be shaken up and modernized."<sup>130</sup>

It is useless for the merchants to circularize the fishermen, asking for better attention in the handling and curing of fish, and then stultify themselves by competing one against the other when purchasing from the fishermen, buying talqual, regardless of damp, giving bonuses, paying freight, and generally by their own actions putting a premium on poorer fish and encouraging a lower standard. Such a policy is suicidal, is admitted to be so, but no combined action is

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<sup>129</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the Year 1910," 437.

<sup>130</sup>Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the Year 1910," 436.

taken to remedy matters.<sup>131</sup>

Despite the lack of improvement in quality, local fish prices during 1910 were generally high and well-sustained due to the partial failure of the fishery north of St. John's from Trinity Bay to Straits and along the Labrador. Indeed, exports had declined by some 230,000 quintals from the year previous. The short catch, however, produced higher prices. As the Board of Trade related in its Second Annual Report:

This shortage in the catch of fish naturally led to a great enhancement of market values, and taking the average prices quoted in all Foreign Markets at the present time, they are probably as high as they have ever reached. This enhancement of values has been sharply reflected in St. John's, and other places in Newfoundland, and the prices paid the fishermen for fish in many cases have been phenomenal.<sup>132</sup>

Despite the failure of the Labrador fishery, fish prices in the local market increased by more than 50¢ a quintal. "The increase in the price of fish, considering that a large quantity has yet to reach the local market, will mean the distribution of much more money among the fishermen than if their catches had reached here a month earlier."<sup>133</sup> Additionally, the price for cod oil had increased to just over \$30.00 a tun, while refined oil had doubled in value. Seal and whale oil prices had also increased. The burdens of daily living also eased in 1910 with

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<sup>131</sup>"Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the Year 1910," 437.

<sup>132</sup>"Second Annual Report of the Newfoundland Board of Trade," 1. See also Daily News, 17 January 1911, 4; and Evening Telegram, 17 January 1911, 7.

<sup>133</sup>Daily News, 30 November 1910, 1.

a general decline in the price of some foodstuffs and basic necessities. By late-November, the price of pork had dropped by more than \$2.50 a barrel, while sugar, kerosene, and some other household goods cost less than at the beginning of the year.<sup>134</sup>

The fisheries for 1912, 1913 and 1914 were exceptional with fish prices increasing in each successive season.<sup>135</sup> As in 1910 and 1911, shortages of catch forced the price of fish upwards in the markets. However, Morris had done nothing about the nagging question of standards in the fishery. But such inaction did not dissuade him, or the Daily News from extolling the virtues of his administration. In February 1913, as a preemptive pre-election move, the Daily News ran a lengthy series of articles chronicling the accomplishments of Morris' four years in power. Concluding on 5 March, just one day following the opening of Assembly, the 26 instalments covered a wide range of topics.<sup>136</sup> Likened to a ship's

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<sup>134</sup>Daily News, 30 November 1910, 1.

<sup>135</sup>"Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries, 1912." Journal of the House of Assembly, 1913. (St. John's: Chronicle Print, 1913), 560-648; "Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries, 1913," 524-44; and "Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries, 1914," 553-55.

<sup>136</sup>See the following issues of the Daily News, 1 February 1913, 4; 3 February 1913, 4; 4 February 1913, 4; 5 February 1913, 4; 6 February 1913, 4; 7 February 1913, 4; 8 February 1913, 4; 10 February 1913, 4; 11 February 1913, 4; 12 February 1913, 4; 13 February 1913, 4; 14 February 1913, 4; 15 February 1913, 4; 17 February 1913, 4; 18 February 1913, 4; 19 February 1913, 4; 20 February 1913, 4; 21 February 1913, 4; 22 February 1913, 4; 24 February 1913, 4; 25 February 1913, 4; 26 February 1913, 4; 27 February 1913, 4; 28 February 1913, 4; 4 March 1913, 4; and 6 March 1913,

captain, Morris had steered the ship of state safely through unknown, dangerous waters:

We do not say that the good fisheries are due to the Premier or his Government, nor that all the factors that go to make up the prosperity of the Island are subject to human control. But the smartest vessel that ever left the stocks would become a derelict if her captain was incompetent and her crew incapable. The good ship Terra Nova is safely anchored in the Harbour of prosperity, which is mainly due to the man on the bridge. The haven is God-given, the ship man-made, but the honours of navigation belong of right to the Captain.<sup>137</sup>

Two instalments in particular celebrated Morris' accomplishments with respect to the fishery.<sup>138</sup> Overall, praise was accorded the Board of Trade for its efforts leading to the establishment of trade agents, its inspection service, and the creation of new markets. But it was to Morris and his wise decision to establish the Board that the News gave the most praise. Above all, Morris had created the preconditions for prosperity:

...wages are larger, prices better, careful provision is made for the protection of life and property, whilst the worn-out toilers when the shadows of life's evening enclose them are no longer left to the pauper's dole. Sir Edward Morris knows the fishermen's life, his needs, and his aspirations and that knowledge he has gained by personal contact with them from boyhood's days; added to his Premiership by visits to the fishing districts in all parts of the Colony.<sup>139</sup>

The Evening Telegram saw things quite differently. The articles were simply an attempt to steal the Board's thunder and give Morris credit for

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<sup>137</sup>Daily News, 1 February 1913, 4.

<sup>138</sup>Daily News, 8 February 1913, 4; and 10 February 1913, 4.

<sup>139</sup>Daily News, 8 February 1913, 4.

circumstances beyond his making:

On careful perusal, one cannot help seeing that it nothing more or less than a spasmodic attempt to boom the Morris administration, for it commences by giving Sir Edward Morris all the glory of forming the Board of Trade, placing him and his Government in the role of Adam and Eve to that institution, and as proof of what has been done goes on to show how the price of codfish has advanced since the present Government assumed power.<sup>140</sup>

During the subsequent election Morris began to take full credit for all the improvements in the economy; the Board, he claimed, had only co-operated with government. At Fogo, in May 1913, Morris praised the accomplishments of his administration--increased Gloucester trade, wireless stations, telegraph lines, improved fish prices, and lighthouses --saying they were all the result of his government's work. In an interview with the News following his return from Fogo, Morris boasted:

I showed them [the people of Fogo] that the steady and permanent increase in the value of the codfishery was, in a measure, very largely due to the policy of the Government by opening up of new markets, the encouraging of new methods of putting up fish, the trade promoted with Gloucester, and the drawing away of a number of people from the fishery into other profitable avenues of employment.<sup>141</sup>

As the campaign heated up for the October 1913 election, Morris continued to tout his government's accomplishments. His 6 October 1913 election manifesto predictably contained no mention of the Board of Trade.<sup>142</sup> Morris was returned to power with 21 seats; five less than in

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<sup>140</sup>Evening Telegram, 24 March 1913, 5.

<sup>141</sup>Daily News, 20 May 1913, 5.

<sup>142</sup>Daily News, 7 October 1913, 4-6.

1909.<sup>143</sup>

The previous cosy relationship between Morris and the Board had begun to unravel during the summer of 1912. In June, the Board complained that the S.S. Fiona had been diverted from the bait protection service to allow the Governor full use of the ship to visit the outports. The Fiona was again diverted in August for the Governor's use. On the first occasion, another steamer was assigned as a replacement,<sup>144</sup> but on the second occasion, there was no replacement. Then from August to October the southwest coast was vulnerable to St. Pierre and Canadian violations of the Bait Act.<sup>145</sup> The Government, however, claimed there was no bait to protect and that the alleged incursions had been exaggerated. The Liberal Evening Telegram took great delight at the rift:

It is somewhat singular to find the Government organ, the Daily News, gibing at a Board of Trade report. The Board of Trade was all right when it was the obedient child of the Government and its reports and doings could be cited in

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<sup>143</sup>See S.J.R. Noel, Politics in Newfoundland. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 112-5; Ian D.H. McDonald, "To Each His Own": William F. Coaker and the Fishermen's Protective Union in Newfoundland Politics, 1908-1925. James K. Hiller, ed. (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, MUN, 1987), 43-4; and Robert J. Brym and Barbara Neis, "Regional Factors in the Formation of the Fishermen's Protective Union of Newfoundland," in Robert J. Brym and R. James Sacouman, eds., Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada. (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1979), 203-18.

<sup>144</sup>Daily News, 18 June 1912, 5 reprints the June 1912 correspondence between George Fearn and Colonial Secretary, Robert Watson.

<sup>145</sup>Daily News, 4 November 1912, 2. See also the two editorials, "Taken to Task - Strong Protest of Board of Trade against Slack Enforcement of Bait Act by the Government," Evening Telegram, 1 November 1912, 4; and "The Morris Failure," Evening Telegram, 5 November 1912, 4.

support of the Government party. But now it is another story. The fat is in the fire, because the Council has reported adversely on the way the Government has carried out the Bait Act during the season just ending.<sup>146</sup>

In January 1913, the Board stiffened its resolve to call the government to task, and strongly protested against the diversion of the Fiona.<sup>147</sup> According to the Board's information, a considerable quantity of squid had been smuggled to St. Pierre by Placentia and Fortune Bay fishers during the Fiona's absence. A significant quantity was also reportedly stored at St. Pierre for use of by French bankers in the spring. Charging the government with ineptitude, the Board reported:

Not only has this bait been carried in contravention of the law, but its presence in St. Pierre is a menace to the successful marketing of our Bank fish next year. The Council therefore urge as strongly as it is possible for them to do, that the law should in future be rigidly enforced, for it is only by the greatest possible vigilance that our bait fishes can be preserved for the use of our own people.<sup>148</sup>

The issue simmered during the next few months. In March 1913, Liberal James M. Kent seized on the opportunity to embarrass the government by joining in the Board's complaint. The Minister of Marine and Fisheries, A.W. Piccott, admitted that a small amount of frozen herring which was "absolutely no good for bait" had gone to Nova Scotia. As for St. Pierre squid, "there was no squid in the cold storage plants. I was through

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<sup>146</sup>Evening Telegram, 4 November 1912, 4.

<sup>147</sup>Evening Telegram, 23 January 1913, 8.

<sup>148</sup>"Fourth Annual Report of the Newfoundland Board of Trade," reprinted in Daily News, 21 January 1913, 5.

them, and there was not a squid in them." Kent remained unconvinced.<sup>149</sup> The charges were false, "merely an attempt to make political capital," replied Morris. As to the Board, Morris offered a stern rebuke: "the man who started this canard, is a man who is trying to get his knife into the Government. Who wrote that section of the Board of Trade Report? A bitter and violent opponent of the Government."<sup>150</sup>

Soon thereafter the Daily News tended to lessen its coverage of the Board's activities. Mostly, the Board was mentioned only in connection with praise for Morris. Where once the News had only praise for the deliberations of the Board, by August 1913, commendation had turned to contempt. Reporting on the Board's recent meetings and its calls for a stronger enforcement of the Bait Act,<sup>151</sup> the News noted that "with some members of the Board of Trade, the Bait Act has become a regular craze, and they are never satisfied unless there is some reference to it in the various reports."<sup>152</sup> The Liberal Evening Telegram, ever watchful for an opportunity to gain political advantage over Morris, especially in an election year, urged on the Board of Trade, saying "that body of mercantile men are not satisfied with the way the Morris Government has

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<sup>149</sup>Daily News, 23 April 1913, 8. (House of Assembly, 25 March 1913)

<sup>150</sup>Daily News, 25 April 1913, 10. (House of Assembly, 25 March 1913)

<sup>151</sup>Evening Telegram, 12 August 1913, 4.

<sup>152</sup>Daily News, 13 August 1913, 4.

carried it [the Bait Act] out."<sup>153</sup> Moreover, the Telegram said, the Board was dissatisfied with government's refusal to consider its recommendations pertaining to common carriers and weights and measures, noting that, "the Council regrets to have to report that the Government could not find time to take up these matters during the last session. A good deal of time and trouble were taken by the various Committees in the preparation of these recommendations and reform is urgently needed."<sup>154</sup> In November, the News again expressed harsh words for the Board. In its opinion, the Board's "so called" quarterly report was prejudiced politically; it read more like a manifesto:

It is a profound pity that a body, whose usefulness might be great indeed, and which owes so much to the co-operation of Sir Edward Morris and his government, should allow itself to be thus used as a means for pulling chestnuts out of the fire for a handful of party politicians.<sup>155</sup>

It is likely that Liberal Edward M. Jackman was the unnamed partisan. The Daily News' coverage of the Board's Fifth Annual Meeting in January 1914 was less extensive than in any previous year. Although the paper noted that the Board's latest report was both credible and useful, it claimed that limitations of space prevented the reprinting of the entire document. Its apology was short and to the point: "we regret that pressure on our columns renders reproduction in its entirety impossible at the present

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<sup>153</sup>Evening Telegram, 13 August 1913, 4.

<sup>154</sup>Evening Telegram, 15 August 1913, 4.

<sup>155</sup>Daily News, 4 November 1912, 4.

time.<sup>156</sup>

By March 1915, Morris appears to have decided to ignore the Board and its recommendations. In reply to the Board's letter of 1 March 1915, which outlined its concerns on the matter of weights and measures, Morris merely acknowledged its receipt. In a lengthy reply, the Board expressed "regret at what they can only consider the curt nature of the reply which has been received to their communication." The Board made it abundantly clear that it did not appreciate Morris' slight even though he may have been preoccupied with the conduct of the war:

The Council fully appreciates the difficulties which surround the Government at the present time, but they feel that their recommendations have for a long time past not received that consideration which they believe they might fairly expect. The Board of Trade was originally called into being at the instance of the Premier, and it has endeavored since that time to do what in it lay [sic] to deal with a large number of problems, and to make, not idly but as the need seemed clear, occasional recommendations to the Government in the general interests of the trade and commerce of the country. Beyond acknowledgment of the receipt of such communications, their recommendations generally appear to have been ignored, at least so far as any tangible results have been attained. The members of the Board and the Council give a large amount of valuable time from their private business to the general subjects which come before them, and when they, as the result of mature deliberation, make recommendations (and these have neither been numerous or trivial), they feel that they are entitled to the attention of some Government Department.<sup>157</sup>

If the Board was expecting an apology from Morris, it was disappointed; it

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<sup>156</sup>Daily News, 27 January 1914, 4.

<sup>157</sup>The correspondence is reprinted in Schedule 5, Seventh Annual Report (1916), 28-31.

received only another curt reply of acknowledgment.

Returned to power following the October 1913 election, Morris finally took action on the vexing problems of the fishery. In February, the House of Assembly resolved itself into a committee of the whole to consider the question of the cure and cull of fish, the standardization of fish exports, the protection and propagation of lobsters, the protection of the seal fishery, the effect of the whale fishery on the bait supply, and the supply of bait. Speaking to the motion and the first question, Morris noted that few could agree on a satisfactory system of standards. But, "the time has now arrived when we should consider whether a system of better cure and, cull of fish should not be adopted in the interests of the merchants, the fishermen and the whole country." Morris believed that once established, a proper system of standards would induce fishers to produce a better quality of fish as they would receive a higher reward for quality. Moreover, the reform would guarantee the quality of market purchases.<sup>158</sup> While members all agreed that a system of standards should be adopted, disagreement prevailed over exactly what should be done. A.E. Hickman, Liberal member for Bay de Verde, thought the matter a serious one, but ruled out an active role for either the Board of Trade, or the Department of Fisheries:

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<sup>158</sup>Daily News, 30 April 1914, 12. (House of Assembly, 13 February 1914.)

The Board of Trade has been grappling with the matter for some time and they do not seem to have arrived at any conclusion as to what should be done. They have wanted to control the cull themselves, if it was introduced, but I do not think it could be controlled by that body because it consists principally of exporters and they might establish rules that would not be approved by the fishermen. Neither would it be advisable to place the matter under the control of the Department of Marine and Fisheries because it might be made a political business in the future and party supporters put in the position of fish cullers. That would be very unsatisfactory and would do our fisheries very great injury.<sup>159</sup>

"Any system which you may introduce must be non-political," he cautioned, "it must not be under the control of a department where it can be connected with politics."<sup>160</sup> James M. Kent, as well, thought the institution of standards important, but wondered how it might be implemented, especially in relation to the question of independent cullers. Moreover, he was critical of the lax approach of the Department of Fisheries, suggesting that its marine and fisheries duties should be handled in separate branches:

The Department is not filling the office for which it was intended. If you will refer to the Statute upon which it was founded, you will find that its authority is large, and the subjects which are given it are large. For instance, I think that the Department of Fisheries should deal with the fisheries pure and simple -- the fishes themselves, the manner in which they are caught, in which they are handled, in which they are sold and in which they are marketed.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup>Daily News, 9 May 1914, 9. (House of Assembly, 19 February 1914.)

<sup>160</sup>Daily News, 9 May 1914, 9. (House of Assembly, 19 February 1914.); and coverage of Hickman's comments in Evening Telegram, 20 February 1914, 6.

<sup>161</sup>Daily News, 9 May 1914, 10. (House of Assembly, 19 February 1914.)

The Evening Telegram, thought Kent's suggestion for reorganization of the fisheries department well worth careful government consideration and agreed that a scientific section should be added. It was now time for government to correct this glaring oversight:

The department should be the chief department of the Government and should be in no way looked upon as an inferior one. It is remarkable that a department should be presided over by a minister who does not occupy a seat in the Executive and left to a Minister who is not in a position to give to the fishery of the Government that precedence in general policy it demands.<sup>162</sup>

William Coaker supported government attempts to initiate standards and argued for the establishment of a commission "composed of representatives of the Board of Trade, fishermen, government and others who would have full charge of carrying out all rules and regulations with regard to the cull and standardization of fish." Coaker remarked, "I have not the slightest doubt but that we will see a reformation take place in this country during the next four years in connection with the fisheries."<sup>163</sup>

Following debate, a select committee was appointed to sit with a committee of the Legislative Council. On 9 March 1914, the select committee presented its report to the House.<sup>164</sup> However, due to the

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<sup>162</sup>Evening Telegram, 21 February 1914, 4.

<sup>163</sup>Daily News, 14 May 1914, 10. (House of Assembly, 20 February 1914.)

<sup>164</sup>The 15-member committee consisted of John Harris, A.W. Piccott, W.C. Job, Philip Templeman, A.F. Goodridge, P.T. McGrath, James Ryan, John Harvey, M.G. Winter, E.P. Morris, M.P. Cashin, J.M. Kent, A.E. Hickman,

magnitude of the task and the limited amount of time, the committee was unable to conduct a complete investigation. It recommended that a commission "with the power to take evidence" sit during the year and prepare a full report to the legislature.<sup>165</sup>

The commission reported its findings and recommendations nine months later, on 1 May 1915. (See Appendix 5: Report of the Commission on Fishery Matters appointed by His Excellency the Governor.<sup>166</sup>) The Board of Trade was curiously silent on the subject of the report. While it was no doubt pleased that government had finally taken some action on the matter of standards, it was perhaps less pleased with government's slow pace. In its Seventh Annual Report, the Board had few comments on the report; it merely reprinted relevant sections from the report and noted that the Commission had endorsed the recommendations of previous Councils.<sup>167</sup> The Board, perhaps recognizing the hopelessness of the situation, could only lament that "the utility of the Board of Trade depends largely on the recognition shown to it by the Government."<sup>168</sup>

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J.R. Goodison, and R. Moulton.

<sup>165</sup>Daily News, 25 July 1914, 8. (House of Assembly, 9 March 1914.)

<sup>166</sup>"Report of the Commission on Fishery Matters appointed by His Excellency the Governor," Journal of the House of Assembly, 1915, 384-94. With the exception of J.M. Kent and J.R. Goodison, the commission's members were the same as the former select committee.

<sup>167</sup>Seventh Annual Report (1916), 11-4.

<sup>168</sup>Evening Telegram, 26 January 1916, 3.

With respect to the first two questions in the report--encouraging the cull of fish and standardization--few concrete solutions were offered, only hope. Admitting that the deterioration in the cure of fish was "threatening the very existence of the Colony," the Commission had to confess to its inability to propose any long-term solutions to the problems:

It has been difficult to work out any unanimous recommendation for coping with the trouble. This problem is unfortunately an exceedingly complicated one under the industrial and economic conditions as they exist in the Colony at present.<sup>169</sup>

As a purely tentative measure, however, the Commission recommended the appointment of two or three "competent" men to work within the fishery and submit detailed reports with recommendations. It also suggested that government should request shippers to cooperate and exercise more care with the shipment and selection of codfish. Specifically, the men should:

...move about in certain defined sections, giving attention as Government officials to this subject, and endeavouring by such means as they may be able to devise, by precept, by practical illustrations and otherwise, to improve the methods now in general use in treating Codfish, and that they be instructed to send regular detailed reports of their work and to make such practical recommendations as may suggest themselves in the pursuance of their duties for more effectually dealing with the evil.<sup>170</sup>

Presumably, officials would visit the outports during the fishing season and demonstrate to fishers how to properly care, clean, and cure their

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<sup>169</sup> "Report of the Commission on Fishery Matters," 388.

<sup>170</sup> "Report of the Commission on Fishery Matters," 386.

fish. The Commission's vagueness on the subject of the suggested duties is indicative of its inability to come to any concrete solution on the matter of standards. Other suggestions, while useful, were somewhat vague, recommending an investigation of Newfoundland's waters in "an intelligent, comprehensive, and scientific way," the employment of a "competent man" and the procurement of a "thoroughly modern steamer" equipped with "the necessary scientific apparatus."<sup>171</sup>

On other questions, including compulsory inspection and certification of all exports, compulsory abandonment of talqual buying, and enforcement of a strict culling system, the Commission said nothing. It did, however, recommend the creation of three-man board, similar to the Canadian Grain Inspection Board, to take on the duties of inspection and standardization, the appointment and licensing of inspectors and cullers, and the creation of rules and regulations regarding the cull.<sup>172</sup>

Compared to other, more modern governmental reports, the 11-page report is telling in its brevity. While comparisons to size are somewhat unfair, its brevity, and its vagueness, is indicative of the relatively unsophisticated nature of both government and its rudimentary bureaucracy in early twentieth-century Newfoundland. Government simply could not effectively address the complexity of the problem and there were few easy solutions. In the end, the Commission simply did not have the

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<sup>171</sup>"Report of the Commission on Fishery Matters," 387.

<sup>172</sup>"Report of the Commission on Fishery Matters," 389.

instruments, nor the wisdom to provide any immediate solutions to the conundrums of the fishery. The report would have little affect on the future course of events. The government, now concerned with the conduct of the war, neglected it. If general prosperity had tended to stall government's attempts at reform from 1910-1914, the events of the next few years paralysed it.

The Board of Trade's attempts to ameliorate the problems of the fishery during this period produced mixed results. Although it achieved a small of measure of success during its first few years of existence, it remained unable to persuade government to take immediate action on the underlying problem of fishery standards. The relative inability of the Board to influence government on many aspects of the fishery, underscores its fundamentally weak relationship with regard to the government and its rudimentary bureaucracy. On its own, it was powerless to bring about widespread reform to the fishery; it had to rely on government to set the agenda. As well, the bureaucracy proved incapable of providing adequate assistance. By 1913, however, its once influential role as government consultant began to diminish and its relationship with Morris became seriously strained.

Government appears to have been deeply concerned with the prospect of a continued deterioration of standards, but relatively unsure of what

measures to take to solve the problems, or commit itself to an expenditure of monies to reorganize the Department of Marine and Fisheries. The problems of the fishery were perhaps far too complex for easy, or cheap solutions. The will was apparent, but the means, elusive. While the government delayed making a decision on the harder question of standards, Morris concentrated his attention on easier, more accessible solutions to improve the nature of the fishery. Cold storage, in particular, offered a way to control seasonal overproduction in the fisheries and a means to break into new North American markets. Cold storage, however, remained only a dream well in advance of its time. Moreover, the government appeared otherwise satisfied with the general course of the economy, especially in relation to the fishery and continued high fish prices. This, above all delayed the pace of reform. By the time government made a positive move to attend to a longer term solution, it had become far too late to initiate meaningful reform. Soon, worldwide events overtook the pace of reform. Unable to bring about fundamental change in the nature of production in the short, but critical period prior to 1914, by war's conclusion, Newfoundland found itself seriously ill-equipped to compete in a changed world. Perhaps the outcome could well have been different if the economy had continued to flounder following 1910, or if the war had not intervened. This, however, was not the case.

Twenty-two years later, in 1937, the Commission of Government

thoroughly investigated the Newfoundland fisheries in the Report of the Commission of Enquiry Investigating the Seafisheries.<sup>173</sup> One of its more important recommendations was the "creation of a Department of Government whose sole care would be the complete supervision of all Fishery matters."<sup>174</sup> The reorganization, however, would not come cheap, requiring "the expenditure of considerable sums of money each year." This, the commissioners estimated, would cost a staggering \$1,170,000.<sup>175</sup> A recommended fund to aid fishermen to repair rooms, stages, boats and gear, along with a fund to aid fishermen to retire their past debts would require an additional \$650,000.<sup>176</sup> These expenditures would be in addition to the estimated \$159,000 required by the Fisheries Division of the Department of Natural Resources for 1936-37. Even with massive state aid, the problems of the Newfoundland fishery would not soon disappear. The proposed system of culling, for example, would not only involve

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<sup>173</sup>Report of the Commission of Enquiry Investigating the Seafisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador other than the Sealfishery, 1937. (St. John's: Dick's & Co., 1937). The commissioners included Herbert R. Brookes, Ernest R. Watson and J. Lewis Little.

<sup>174</sup>Commission of Enquiry, 1937, 172.

<sup>175</sup>The estimates included the provision for additional staffing (\$100,000); establishing a system of culling (\$30,000); establishing inspection standards for export (\$50,000); a gasoline subsidy (\$30,000); distribution of salt (\$10,000); cultivation of new markets (\$20,000); aid to community efforts for fish meal, canning plants, etc. (\$10,000); governmental involvement in a contributory scheme of insurance against catch failures, accidents and loss of boats and gear (\$120,000); and a bonus on catch (\$800,000). Commission of Enquiry, 1937, 172-5, 196-9.

<sup>176</sup>Commission of Enquiry, 1937, 176, 199.

considerable cost, but the commissioners thought, "will take some time to organize the system and to obtain and train the cullers."<sup>177</sup> The commissioners, however, were steadfast in their recommendation to spend the monies to reorganize the Department of Fisheries "as it will need considerable time, and much care, successfully to bring the same into being."<sup>178</sup> Without essential government aid, it was their conviction that "it is hopeless to look for any change that will have permanent benefit to those whose livelihood is dependent upon the fisheries."<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup>Commission of Enquiry, 1937, 116.

<sup>178</sup>Commission of Enquiry, 1937, 193.

<sup>179</sup>Commission of Enquiry, 1937, 196.

Chapter V - Conclusion

This examination has attempted to provide a broader perspective on the nature of Newfoundland fisheries development during the critical period prior to World War I by exploring the role of the Newfoundland Board of Trade in the formation of government policies. As this period has been relatively unexplored by historians, the standard interpretation has assumed that government was negligent in its responsibilities and that Newfoundland's merchants were shortsighted on the question of fishery reform. But was there was a wider societal debate over the future of the fisheries that has somehow been absent from the historical literature? More specifically, did the government or the merchants respond to the problems of a rapidly deteriorating fishery? If so, what sort of solutions did they propose, and how successful were these solutions? If solutions were proposed, then what accounts for their failure?

Contrary to the standard interpretation, this study has demonstrated that the Newfoundland Board of Trade, and by association its merchant constituency, was formed as a direct response to the 1907-08 fishery crisis. Moreover, the new Board saw fisheries reform as its principal objective. A parallel organization to the Fisherman's Protective Union, the Board responded to the enormous difficulties in the fisheries by seeking a constructive role in the development of government policies for this critical component of Newfoundland's economy. In particular, the

Board called for a series of measures designed to deal with the worsening conditions related to standardization, production, markets, and shipping. This study has also demonstrated that the Board could not convince government to take immediate action on the root problems of the fishery, nor could it alter fundamental habits in the traditional fishery on its own. Compromised by the Morris government's refusal to grant it regulatory powers over the fishery, the Board could only promote the need for structural change. Unfortunately, by the end of the study period, the fishery remained virtually unchanged. Indeed, the problems had worsened by 1914; high fish prices and increased market demand for Newfoundland fish lowered quality and solidified the propensity to purchase fish talqual. By 1915, worldwide events overtook reform, subordinating it to a patriotic struggle to win the war.

The Morris government vacillated on the hard question of fishery standards throughout the period believing there was adequate time to not only devise solutions, but to effect widespread reform. The positive, but illusionary nature of the economy from 1910 onwards was a vital element in forestalling immediate government action. Lured into a false sense of security by the improvement of the economy after 1909, government muddled its way through the remaining period seeking more readily accessible solutions to improve the nature of the fishery. The Sölling process and cold storage were technological solutions that not only offered ways to control seasonal overproduction, but provided a means to establish new

markets for Newfoundland's fish on the North American mainland. Both, however, failed.

It is debatable whether the Board of Trade or the government could have substantially altered the deteriorating state of the fishery in the four short years prior to World War I. Even with wider regulatory powers to control standards, there may not have been sufficient time to change centuries of habit and custom, or prepare Newfoundland's fisheries for the realities of the twentieth century. As both the 1915 "Report of the Commission on Fishery Matters," and the 1937 Report of the Commission of Enquiry Investigating the Seafisheries clearly demonstrated, there were no easy answers to the enormous problems plaguing the fishery.

This study has attempted to understand the critical relationship between Sir Edward Morris and the Board of Trade. While Morris appeared genuinely concerned over the fate of the fishery, he may have been manipulating the Board for his own political advantage. Morris' shifting relationship with the Board remains suspect. It appears that the Board's relevance to Morris changed as political circumstances evolved. What is clear, however, is that his relationship with the Board changed from valued friend to critical adversary over the course of the period. However, without a more comprehensive study of the period, Morris' character and motivations are a matter of some speculation.

This study strongly supports William Reeves' contention that the failure to institute widespread fishery reforms was not so much a

reflection of inertia or disinclination, but rather derived from Newfoundland's inability to both introduce and sustain new technologies. Among the reasons was that the small colonial government did not have the financial or technical skills and resources to resolve the enormous problems in the fishery, while both political and mercantile leaders had little maneuvering space and few development options.

This study has challenged the standard interpretation of the development debate by examining the integral role that the Newfoundland Board of Trade played in the formation of government policies on the fisheries. Moreover, it is argued that the merchant perspective is a necessary component of historical analysis and that its inclusion can significantly illuminate our understanding of Newfoundland history.

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Appendix 1:Councils of the Newfoundland Board of Trade, 1909-1917

<u>1909-10:</u>	<u>1912:</u>
President:	President
Marmaduke G. Winter	George C. Fearn
1st Vice-President:	1st Vice-President:
Hon. John Harris	Hon. Marmaduke G. Winter
2nd Vice-President:	2nd Vice-President:
William G. Gosling	William G. Gosling
Secretary/Treasurer:	Secretary/Treasurer:
George C. Fearn	H.H. Goodridge
Councillors:	Councillors:
Hon. John B. Ayre	Hon. John Anderson
Hon. Robert K. Bishop	George J. Carter
R.F. Goodridge	John Browning (2nd term)
Hon. John Harvey	Alan F. Goodridge
William F. Horwood	Edward M. Jackman
William C. Job	Hon. William C. Job
Samuel Milley	James J. McKay
J.H. Monroe	J.C. Marshall (2nd term)
John S. Munn	M. Mayers
William A. Munn	Alexander H. Murray (2nd term)
Daniel A. Ryan	F.H. Steer (2nd term)
J.J. St. John	Philip Templeman
<u>1911:</u>	<u>1913:</u>
President:	President:
Hon. William C. Job	William G. Gosling
1st Vice-President:	1st Vice-President:
William G. Gosling	Walter S. Monroe
2nd Vice-President:	2nd Vice-President:
Hon. Marmaduke G. Winter	Charles P. Ayre
Secretary/Treasurer:	Secretary/Treasurer:
George C. Fearn	Ernest A. Payn
Councillors:	Councillors:
Hon. John B. Ayre (2nd term)	Hon. John Anderson (2nd term)
Hon. Robert K. Bishop (2nd term)	Hon. John R. Bennett
John Browning	John Browning
Hon. John Harvey (2nd term)	George J. Carter
William F. Horwood	George C. Fearn
J.C. Marshall	Hon. A. F. Goodridge (2nd term)
Samuel Milley	Edward M. Jackman (2nd term)
John S. Munn (2nd term)	Robert B. Job
Alexander H. Murray	James J. McKay
Daniel A. Ryan	Alexander McDougall
J.J. St. John	Hon. Philip Templeman (2nd term)
F.H. Steer	

1914:

President:  
 John S. Munn  
 1st Vice-President:  
 Charles P. Ayre  
 2nd Vice-President:  
 Walter S. Monroe  
 Secretary/Treasurer:  
 Ernest A. Payn  
 Councillors:  
 John Browning (2nd term)  
 Henry E. Cowan  
 George C. Fearn (2nd term)  
 William H. Franklin  
 William G. Gosling  
 Hon. John Harris  
 Reuben F. Horwood  
 Robert B. Job (2nd term)  
 Alexander McDougall (2nd term)  
 Frank McNamara  
 John V. O'Dea  
 Robert G. Winter

1915:

President:  
 Walter S. Monroe  
 1st Vice-President:  
 Robert B. Job  
 2nd Vice-President:  
 Reuben F. Horwood  
 Secretary/Treasurer:  
 Ernest A. Payn  
 Councillors:  
 Charles P. Ayre  
 Eric A. Bowring  
 Henry E. Cowan (2nd term)  
 William H. Franklin (2nd term)  
 Hon. John Harvey  
 Hon. John Harris (2nd term -  
 dies in office)  
 Frank McNamara (2nd term)  
 J.C. Marshall  
 John V. O'Dea (2nd term)  
 James Parker  
 George R. Williams  
 Robert G. Winter (2nd term)

1916:

President:  
 Robert B. Job  
 1st Vice-President:  
 Reuben F. Horwood  
 2nd Vice-President:  
 Robert G. Winter  
 Secretary/Treasurer:  
 Ernest A. Payn  
 Councillors:  
 Charles P. Ayre (2nd term)  
 Eric A. Bowring (2nd term)  
 Hon. John Harvey (2nd term)  
 A. Macpherson  
 J.C. Marshall (2nd term)  
 William A. Munn  
 J.A. Paddon  
 James Parker (2nd term)  
 C.R. Steer  
 E.W. Taylor  
 Robert A. Templeton  
 George R. Williams (2nd term)

1917:

President:  
 Walter B. Grieve  
 1st Vice-President:  
 Robert G. Winter  
 2nd Vice-President:  
 George R. Williams  
 Secretary/Treasurer:  
 Ernest A. Payn  
 Councillors:  
 James C. Ayre  
 H.R. Brookes  
 C.A.C. Bruce  
 A. Macpherson (2nd term)  
 James J. McKay  
 William A. Munn (2nd term)  
 Alexander H. Murray  
 J.A. Paddon (2nd term)  
 F.C. Smythe  
 C.R. Steer (2nd term)  
 E.W. Taylor (2nd term)  
 Robert A. Templeton (2nd term)

Appendix 2: Newfoundland Board of Trade Members, 1909

Anderson, John	Goodridge, Alan F.	O'Dea, J.V.
Anderson, R.H.	Goodridge, R.F.	Outerbridge, Harold
Ayre, Charles P.	Grieve, Walter B.	Outerbridge, J.
Ayre, John B.	Harris, John	Outerbridge, N.A.
Ayre, John Bulley	Harris, Samuel	Paddon, J.A.
Baird, D.	Harvey, A.J.	Parker, L.
Baird, David	Harvey, Charles McKay	Peel, Thomas
Baird, Hugh	Harvey, John	Peters, J.E.P.
Barr, George M.	Hayward, G.J.	Peters, Joseph
Barron, John	Healey, John J.	Piccot, A.
Bearns, W.E.	Henderson, J.	Prowse, Algernon, H.
Bishop, Robert K.	Hickman, Albert E.	Rankin, A.D.
Blackburn, Charles	Holden, R.M.	Rendell, A.S.
Bowring, Eric A.	Horwood, E.J.	Rendell, F.E.
Browning, John	Horwood, W.F.	Rendell, R.G.
Bryden, Alex	Job, Robert B.	Robinson, J. Alex
Campbell, Colin	Job, William C.	Rodger, A.
Campbell, W.	McDougall, Alex	Ryan, D.A.
Carter, George H.	McKay, James J.	Ryan, James
Cashin, Michael P.	McNamara, Frank	Ryan, J.D.
Chaplin, Mark	McNeil, T.M.	St. John, J.J.
Clouston, Walter	McPherson, A.	Shea, George
Cowan, H.E.	March, N.	Squires, Richard A.
Crosbie, John C.	Marshall, J.C.	Smyth, Thomas
Crowdy, W.H.	Martin, W.	Steer, C.R.
Davidson, W.H.	Milley, Samuel	Steer, F.H.
Devine, M.A.	Monroe, D.	Stott, James
Diamond, Levi	Monroe, J.H.	Strang, Ralph W.
Dickenson, G.H.	Monroe, Walter S.	Syme, J.
Dickenson, H.W.	Morey, James	Templeman, Philip
Edens, T.J.	Morison, Donald	Templeton, R.A.
Ellis, W.A.	Morris, Edward P.	Urquhart, J.B.
Ellis, W.J.	Munn, Archibald	Williams, George R.
Fearn, G.C.	Munn, John S.	Winter, Thomas
Fennell, R.	Munn, W.A.	Winter, Marmaduke
Franklin, William H.	Murphy, J.J.	Withers, J.W.
Garland, S.E.	Murray, A.H.	Wright, Robert
Gosling, William G.	Neal, George	Wright, Robert, Jr.

(Source: Act of Incorporation and By-Laws of the Newfoundland Board of Trade. (St. John's: Gazette Print, 1909), 5. PANL, MG73, Box #1, file 1.)

Appendix 3:  
Newfoundland Board of Trade Circular on the Curing of Fish

DIRECTIONS

**SPLITTING:** As soon as possible after the fish is caught it should be split, carrying knife down and laying fish open to the tail. Do not split left handed as it spoils the appearance and value of the fish. Be careful in raising the sound-bone not to dip the knife (which at once makes the fish cullage) and take out the bone as far down as possible so as to leave no blood.

**SALTING:** All blood (particular attention being given to the clots on the shoulder bones and back-bone) or scraps of liver should be carefully washed off before the fish is put under salt. Care should be taken to lay the fish open and smooth when salting; the quantity of salt must be taken into account. Fishermen are recommended to use the same kind of salt every year. Salt small fish and large in separate bulks. Salt your fish, whenever possible in BULK, but if pens or "vats" must be availed of, THEY MUST NOT BE TIGHT, from the fish the pickle must run out freely. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT. All fish should be well washed before being salted.

There are some fishermen who make a practice of pickling their fish. This is one of the greatest evils in connection with the fish trade. Fish that is pickled CAN NEVER BE KEPT DRY. It always sweats in bulk, and after lying any length of time gives off a very offensive smell. No fish merchant will pay merchantable price for pickled fish; AVOID THIS MOST HARMFUL PRACTICE OF PICKLING YOUR FISH.

**WASHING:** After lying in salt bulk a suitable time, wash the fish perfectly clean in plenty of sea-water - the vat or tub should be half-filled with fish laid in smoothly and then filled to the brim with clean water, which must be run off before more fish is put in. All fish should be well cleansed from the blood stains and a scrubbing brush used to "wash" with. Do not use a "mop" or "cloth" they only "swab" and do not clean the fish.

**SPREADING, ETC.:** To make good fish well-boughed flakes are necessary. To cure fish properly it is necessary to let the back have as much sun as the face, until fish is well stiffened it must be spread face up only to prevent sunburn. When fish is sunburnt it is almost valueless. DO EVERYTHING YOU CAN TO PREVENT FISH GETTING SUNBURNT.

Should your fish, because of bad weather get slimy, wash it with clean sea-water and not pickle before spreading when the weather becomes fine.

To those fishing upon the banks or elsewhere in decked crafts the following practice is strongly urged: Upon the landing of each trip the vessel's hold should be thoroughly scrubbed and washed out using 6 to 10 lbs. washing soda in the water - the Pens or pound board being cleansed in the same way. The cost will be trifling, and the delay very little, but the effect upon the condition of the voyage will be very marked. The greater part of the bad ill-smelling BANK FISH - (so much of which is seen every Fall) is traceable to the condition of the "hold" in which fish has been salted.

Do not use "pitchforks" or other similar tools to handle fish with. If a "gaff" is used be careful to stick it in the "head" and not the body of the fish.

Instead of disputing and criticising the instructions given herein, you are respectfully requested to follow them out for a year or two and mark the result.

(Source: Board of Trade Minute Book #1, 22 April 1910 meeting, 139.)

Appendix 4:  
Newfoundland Board of Trade Split Herring Circular

St. John's, Newfoundland  
June 7th, 1911.

Dear Sir,

I beg to call your attention to the unsatisfactory quality of SPLIT HERRING which has been arriving in ST. JOHN'S for some years past, and to inform you that the BOARD OF TRADE are now instituting a system of inspection with a view of improving the market value of these goods.

Permit me to say that HERRINGS should always be packed in a perfectly fresh condition. It is very harmful to place them in cod, or other bags, and then hang them over the sides of boats or vessels, which has often been done in the past, or allow them to remain for even a few hours after they have been caught, without been put away.

HERRINGS should be split immediately they are caught and the point of the knife passed along the backbone in order to break the skin which runs along the back and contains a certain amount of blood. After they are thus split they should be washed clean in water, and after the water has run off, and a few minutes allowed for draining, they should at once be packed away in the barrels with a sufficient quantity of salt, care being taken to fill their bellies with this material. Sufficient time should always be allowed for the HERRINGS to settle before heading the barrels, and the barrels re-topped with HERRINGS at least twice before the head is finally put in. At the bottom of the barrel, and also at the top, two or three handfull of salt should be placed.

ASSORTMENT

HERRINGS must be packed in assorted sizes; LARGE HERRINGS should be 13 inches and over in length, when measured from the crutch of the tail to the tip of the head, or if the Herrings are thick and deep then it is sufficient if they do not count over 400 to the barrel. MEDIUM HERRINGS should be in the same way from 11 to 13 inches in length, or if they are thick HERRINGS then not over 500 to the barrel. ALL HERRINGS under 11 inches, and counting more than 500 to the barrel will grade as SMALL. Each barrel must contain 202 lbs. of HERRINGS. A great many barrels arrive here 20, 30 and even 40 lbs. short of this weight. This is because the HERRINGS are not allowed to settle after they are first packed and re-topped before heading. HERRINGS must always be removed carefully from the net so that the heads are not torn, for these HERRINGS are not in demand, and always thrown out as cullage.

## BARRELS

It is of the utmost importance that good, solid barrels should be used, and no others. they should be carefully coopered with three bilge and three chime hooks at each end with four "spads" between them. I want to impress you particularly with the great importance of getting good packages for they will have to be coopered here, and put in shipping condition at the expense of the packer. It therefore follows that the better they arrive here the less expense there will be attending them.

In establishing this inspection the BOARD OF TRADE is desirous of benefitting everyone engaged in the trade. To the credit of some people in the Outports who ship HERRINGS here regularly, it may be said they come in excellent order, the barrels well filled and the HERRINGS well saved, but on the other hand there are others who send their HERRINGS here in a most unsatisfactory condition, good and bad being mixed together through the barrels, the barrels not full, and the barrels themselves of inferior quality and badly coopered. Those who have been sending their HERRINGS here and taking care with them will only need to assort the sizes to make their shipments entirely satisfactory, but those who have been putting their HERRINGS up in any sort of a manner will require to adopt entirely new methods in order to pass the inspection of the BOARD OF TRADE.

For and on behalf of NEWFOUNDLAND BOARD OF TRADE,

G.C. FEARN, Hon. Secretary-Tres.

(Source: Minute Book, November 1910 - March 1914, Newfoundland Board of Trade, PANL, MG73, Box #71, (5/A1,82), 2 June 1911 meeting, insert.)

Appendix 5:  
Report of the Commission on Fishery Matters  
appointed by His Excellency the Governor

To His Excellency Sir Walter Edward Davidson, Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Island of Newfoundland and its Dependencies.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:-

In pursuance of the task entrusted to us, by the Commission which Your Excellency addressed to us on March 13, 1914, directing us to inquire into and report to you as to the best means of: --

- (a) Encouraging the cure of fish, whether by establishing a cull or standard in the purchase of same, or otherwise;
- (b) Standardizing or branding of all fish when exported from Newfoundland and Labrador;
- (c) Protection and propagation of lobsters;
- (d) Protection of the Seal Fishery by the establishment of a close season, if found necessary, or otherwise;
- (e) Conserving our Bait Fishes;
- (f) Ascertaining if the prosecution of the Whale Fishery tends to injure the fishery;
- (g) Preserving for our fishermen Bait Fishes --

We have given very full and careful consideration to these subjects.

At the session of the Legislature in the early weeks of 1914, Resolutions were adopted by both Houses in respect to the foregoing matters, and a Joint Committee was appointed [sic] to undertake their consideration. This Committee, though it made some progress, found itself unable to complete its inquiries before the Session closed, and accordingly reported to both Houses on March 9th to this effect, and recommended "that the Legislature adopt an Address to His Excellency the Governor-in-Council, praying him to appoint a Commission with power to take evidence, to sit during the year, and to prepare a full report for submission to the Legislature at the next Session." This Report being adopted, Your Excellency was pleased to reappoint the members of that Joint committee as a Commission under the great Seal, to wit: --

Hon. John Harris, President Legislative Council.  
 Hon. John Harvey  
 Hon. W.C. Job  
 Hon. M.G. Winter  
 Hon. A.F. Goodridge  
 Hon. P. Templeman

Hon. P.T. McGrath  
 Hon. James Ryan  
 Hon. J.R. Goodison, Speaker House of Assembly  
 Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister  
 Minister of Marine and Fisheries [A.W. Piccott]  
 Minister of Finance and Customs [M.P. Cashin]  
 J.M. Kent, Esq., K.C.  
 Robert Moulton, Esq.  
 A.E. Hickman, Esq.

The Commission at its first sitting chose Mr. Piccott, Minister of Marine and Fisheries, to be its Chairman, and Mr. McGrath its Secretary.

Consideration of the work entrusted to the Commission was taken in hand promptly, and the enquiry was pursued at convenient periods throughout the year 1914, and up to the present time; and after having given to the study of the above subjects very exhaustive attention, examining many witnesses and considering such other information as was procurable, the Commission finds itself in a position to deal with them as follows: --

- (a) Encouraging the cure of fish, whether by establishing a call or standard in the purchase of same, or otherwise;
- (b) Standardising or branding of all fish when exported from Newfoundland or Labrador.

These matters have proved, perhaps, the most difficult of any that were submitted for the consideration of the Commission, owing to the divergent opinions which are held, by those interested, as to the possibilities of coping with the situation by legislative enactment.

The views of all interests concerned were ascertained, and as many of the members of the Commission are actively engaged in the conduct of the various fisheries of the Colony, it was possible for these at all times to bring to bear their practical experiences on the various suggestions that were presented. The discussion on this and the other questions will be found very fully reported in the summaries of the evidence of the witnesses attached to this Report.

In connection with this branch of the inquiry, the Commission issued circulars [sic] to exporters of fish from the Colony, some sixty-three altogether, inviting suggestions as to how these problems could be solved, but they regret to report that a decided lack of interest was exhibited by many, not more than ten replies being received.

With a view, moreover, to secure as early action as possible in the way of introducing remedial measures, the Commission, at its meeting on June 11th last, adopted the following Resolutions, which were transmitted to the Government in order that such steps might be taken with regard thereto as in the judgment of the Government were desirable: --

RESOLVED: --

The deterioration in the cure of Newfoundland codfish, so noticeable in recent years is one of the most serious factors -- if not the most serious factor -- in the commercial life of this Colony today. The effect upon the production and value of the Labrador fishery is already lamentable in the extreme.

It is not too much to say that as a general tendency, this evil -- the deterioration in the cure of fish -- is threatening the very existence of the Colony. The problem of correction is a most difficult one and the Commission is not at the present moment prepared to make any definite recommendation for dealing comprehensively with it; but the Commission fully realizes that it is one of the most important, if not the most important, of all the questions which it has to consider.

In the meantime, as a purely tentative and preliminary measure the Commission suggests the advisability of appointing two or three competent men, to move about in certain defined sections, giving their attention as Government officials to this subject, and endeavouring by such means as they may be able to devise, by precept, by practical illustrations and otherwise, to improve the methods now in general use in treating Codfish, and that they be instructed to send regular detailed reports of their work and to make such practical recommendations as may suggest themselves in the pursuance of their duties for more effectually dealing with the evil.

The Commission further suggests that the Government might advantageously circularize shippers, requesting them to co-operate in an effort to have more care exercised in connection with the shipping and selection of Newfoundland Codfish both Shore and Labrador.

RESOLVED: --

This Comissoin [sic] desires to record its view that some attempt should long ago have been made to investigate in an intelligent, comprehensive, and scientific way, the waters and fishing grounds contiguous to the shores of the Colony and Labrador.

They respectively urge that as soon as the necessary financial and other arrangements can be made this work should be undertaken.

The Commission is of the opinion that the services of a thoroughly competent man, combining scientific training and practical knowledge of the fishing industry should be engaged, and that without certain broadly defined limits, he should be given the widest possible discretion in the pursuance of his work. He should not be hampered in the selection and remuneration of his assistants or in the expenditure of whatever sum it may be found possible to provide.

We have practically no detailed knowledge of the ocean bottom round our coast, nor has there ever been any intelligent attempt to locate new fishing areas which unquestionably exist.

The defined ocean layers, their depths and characteristics, the various currents, the occurrence of plankton and other marine organisms, marine plants and their bearing upon ocean life, the occurrence and migration of herring, the occurrence of halibut and other kinds of fish, the study of variations of temperatures and salinity relative to annual catch, the testing and trying out of different methods of fishing and curing, experiments with bait and a host of other matters calling for examination.

A thoroughly modern steamer, equipped not only with the necessary scientific apparatus, but also fitted for practical fishing with modern appliances suited to various bottoms, depths and different species of fish should be provided.

It is almost an universal belief that not one-half of the fish producing capacity of the Colony has been reached, and the Commission fully concurs in this view.

It is, however, certain that further extended development cannot safely be left to private initiative alone. The fisheries of the Colony have for all intents and purposes been rather retrograding, or at best have been stationary, for some time past, and the time for their further development should be no longer postponed.

Investigations along these lines have been pursued with exceedingly valuable results in other countries, and it is not too much to say that the whole future of Newfoundland depends to a very great extent upon the successful result of such work here.

The Commission, therefore, feels that its inauguration should be no longer delayed.

Since that date a further larger amount of consideration has been given to the question of the best means of improving the cure of Codfish. This is perhaps the most important matter submitted to the Commission, and it has been difficult to work out any unanimous recommendation for coping with the trouble. This problem is unfortunately an exceedingly complicated one under the industrial and economic conditions as they exist in the Colony at present.

One main cause of deterioration in cure and undoubtedly lies with the Talqual system which has become almost universal. The fish buyers and exporters are in the first place responsible for this. It has been adopted by them against the general judgement and as a result of extreme competition and absence of co-operation among them.

Most of the current suggestions for re-establishing more careful handling and cure are found upon detailed examination to present great practical difficulties, which in the opinion of the undersigned tend to

make their employment of doubtful value.

The Commission has considered the following suggestions: --

- (a) A compulsory or a voluntary inspection and certifying of all exports, or of a large or small defined section of exports.
- (b) A compulsory abandonment of Talqual buying.
- (c) An enforcement of a strict culling system between buyers and sellers.
- (d) The suggested general disassociation of the curing establishments from the catching of the Fish.
- (e) A Government grant of a bonus to the curer for strictly prime merchantable fish.

We recommend that there be created a Board, similar to the Canadian Grain Inspection Board, to be known as the Fish Inspection Board. That this Board be composed of three members -- one to be named by the Governor-in-Council, another by the Board of Trade at St. John's, and the third by the members of the House of Assembly who sit for outport districts, excluding holders of Executive and Departmental seats, as these will already have their say in the choice of the Government's nominee. That this Board have power to make rules for inspecting and standardizing fish, and to appoint and license Inspectors and Cullers, and to pass such rules and regulations as they may consider necessary to regulate the cull, and thus cause more attention to the cure and an improved valued for our staple in foreign markets.

(c) Protection and Propagation of Lesters [sic]

The endeavour to deal with the problems of the lobster fishery elicited very voluminous information. The Commission, too, in order to secure the greatest possible light on this question, invited the members of the Council of the Board of Trade to participate in a discussion of this matter on November 28th, when the subject was exhaustively discussed, in the light of the information that had been previously obtained, notably that supplied by the officials of the Department of Marine and Fisheries, engaged in the carrying out of Lobster protection and propagation work as at present practised under the authority of that Department.

Following upon this joint conference a meeting of the Board of Trade was held and the lobster questions submitted to that organization, with the result that the Resolutions were adopted as follows: --

1. It is the opinion of the Board of Trade that it is desirable to close down the catching of Lobsters for the coming season.
2. The Board of Trade is also of the opinion that further legislation is required for the preservation of the Lobster fishery

to succeed closing.

After still further discussion, however, the following Recommendations were ultimately adopted in regard to this industry, which the commission submits as its conclusions thereon:

That the present system of Reserve Areas and the purchase of Seed Lobsters for deposition therein be fully developed and extended.

That the elimination of illegal Lobster pots be more effectively enforced.

That the Superintendent be instructed to proceed at the earliest possible date, before packing commences, to the various fishing sections for the purposes of inspecting all Lobster Pots before permitting them to be put in the water and also for the purpose of extending the reservation policy.

That the Minister of Marine and Fisheries be given authority to change the existing system of wardens by reducing their numbers, and that fewer men be appointed whose sole duty shall be the protection and overseeing of the Lobster fishery, also that he be authorized to pay them if and when he considers it expedient such wages as he may think fit not exceeding \$160 for the fishing season.

That as far as possible no license shall be issued to any person excepting upon the recommendation of the Superintendent.

Finally, that the present grant for Lobster Fishery purposes available to the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, be increased by such amount as he may consider necessary (subject to the approval of the authorities) in order that the above work may be thoroughly well carried out.

**(d) Protection of the Seal Fishery by the establishment of a close season, if found necessary, or otherwise.**

In relation to the question of the seal fishery, the Commission took the evidence of sealing captains and others who were thought capable of throwing some light on the subject, and also had 750 books printed, containing a series of questions to be answered, as far as possible, by the officers and men on the ships engaged in the seal fishery, and numbers of these were supplied to the ships leaving port last year, in the hope that they would elicit a very great volume of information that would be of value; but, much to the regret of the Commission, not more than a dozen of these books were filled up and returned, a circumstance evidencing a deplorable lack of interest.

As a result of a close examination of all the evidence which the Commission found itself able to obtain in relation to the sea fishery, a majority of the Commission found in favour of the following Recommendations:

- That there be a close season on hood seals for three years.  
 That no seals be killed by the crews of the steel ships after April 15.  
 That the Canadian Government be asked to enact similar sealing regulations to our own.  
 That wooden ships be limited to the use of fifteen rifles each.

Hon. J. Harvey and Hon J. Ryan submitted a minority report setting forth their views in regard to the seal fishery, which is as follows: --

The undersigned dissent from the majority findings in regard to the Seal Fishery in certain important particulars.

1. They claim that the use of guns should be prohibited upon all steamers, wooden as well as steel.
2. And that all steamers, wooden as well as steel, should cease killing after April 15th.

The paramount consideration to be aimed at is the preservation and augmentation of the industry. This object should outweigh any purely temporary consideration such as the provision of any device to give an artificial handicap in favour of the older wooden ships, if such is to be supplied [sic] at the possible expense of the raw material, upon which the future of the entire industry depends.

The view put forward herein is that common sense, as well as the considered opinion of a majority of those most competent to judge, and also the evidence of statistics, all points to the conclusion that the destruction of old seals and bedlamers has been the principal factor in the decline of the seal herd along the East Coast. Facilities for such destruction are enhanced by the use of guns, also by lengthening the open season at its end. Furthermore, shooting admittedly involved great and unavoidable waste.

In the Gulf, where for a series of years very few bedlamers or old were taken, the seals have increased in a remarkable ratio. The following records of the catch for the past twelve year show this quite clearly:-

FRONT:	Young Harps	Old and Bedlamers
Average catch last 3 years (1911-1913)	164,000	14,215
" " previous 3 years (1908-1910)	198,000	20,403
" " " 3 years (1905-1907)	206,000	16,324
" " " 3 years (1902-1904)	242,000	16,856

During this entire period the catch of Old and Bedlamers averaged fairly regularly, and there has been not the slightest diminution in the percentage of the take of these classes in recent years - rather the

contrary.

If this goes on indefinitely the industry must rapidly continue to decline towards ultimate extinction.

In contrast to the Front, the Gulf catch has been: --

GULF:	Young Harps	Old and Bedlamers
Average catch last 3 years (1911-1913)	41,426	5,103
" " previous 3 years (1908-1910)	40,630	4,834
" " " 3 years (1905-1907)	16,752	372
" " " 3 years (1902-1904)	13,479	434

It will thus be seen that, following the six years 1902-1907 (when practically all the Gulf Old Harps and Bedlamers escaped), there was an enormous increase in the number of Gulf Seals. The annual take of young has increased two and a half times.

These figures as well as other considerations point to the paramount necessity that exists for preserving the Old and Bedlamers.

Every probability warrants the theory that enough young will always escape to make good the losses of old seals from natural causes, and it may be reasonably concluded that if proper protection is afforded the seals after they have passed the whitecoat stage, a steady increase in their numbers may be expected. This increase is as important for the wooden steamers as for any others.

This minority report, therefore, urges that as the simplest way of protecting the classes upon which the growth of the herd depends, the above recommendations should be made law.

(e) Conserving our Bait Fishes

(g) Preserving for our Fishermen Bait Fishes

To the various aspects of these features of its work the Commission gave considerable attention, and found therein a problem of exceptional difficulty.

In regard to the questions: (1) Of conservation of Bait Fishes, and (2) of Cold Storage preservation of bait, the Commission is of opinion:

That too little is known of the natural history of Fish of all kinds frequenting our waters.

That this absence of scientific knowledge applies to bait fishes as well as others.

(1) In the absence of intelligent scientific investigation the Commission believes that no special steps are called for at present, directed towards conservation of the bait supply, and that there need be no restrictions imposed upon the methods employed in taking

Fish for bait purposes. At the same time penalties should be enforced for any wilful waste.

(2) As regards preservation of bait by cold storage or otherwise, the Commission is of opinion that the present law which provides 30 per cent. refund of the cost of establishing freezing plants ought to be quite sufficient encouragement for the erection of these plants, and that the more widespread development which appears so desirable should be left to private enterprise. Such development is likely to follow rapidly as soon as the success and value of plants recently erected and now projected, have been proven. The substitution of an operating bonus in the shape of bonus per cwt. of frozen bait actually delivered to fishermen; and eliminating the present restrictions in regard to distribution and terms of sale, might advantageously be substituted for the present provisions of the Act, which undertake on the one hand to return a substantial proportion of the operating expenses, while on the other hand they seriously curtail the freedom of the owners as regards the operation of their plant.

The important matter is that the bait should be preserved and distributed -- other considerations being of secondary importance at this stage. Subsidized freezers must confine their distribution to Newfoundland fishermen.

**(f) Ascertaining if the Prosecution of the Whale Fishery Tends to Injure the Fishery.**

In pursuing its inquiries into this question, the members of the Commission were struck with the divergent views expressed by those engaged in the whaling industry and the fishermen generally, but inasmuch as the whaling industry is now virtually extinct and the problem is no longer a serious economic and industrial one, the Commission embodies its views in the following terms: --

The Commission finds no tangible proof that the presence or absence of Whales affect the bait supply.

Scientific study in Norway upon more than one occasion has always resulted in a negative conclusion as far as that country is concerned.

There was much diversity of opinion among the witnesses examined by the Commission, but no real evidence was forthcoming to warrant the conclusion that either herring, caplin or squid are driven into shore by the Whales as is so often claimed.

Those whose experience has been directly with the whaling industry are quite unanimous in their opinion that the incidence of the two have no causal relation to one another.

There is good reason to think that on some parts of the coast where

Whales have been hunted for many years, the bait fisheries show no very decided variation from former days.

On the other hand it is impossible to ignore the very decided and most general attitude of the practical working fishermen in this matter. While as a general rule unable to justify their belief by clear explanations as to the questions of "why and how," they are almost unanimous in the view that the destruction or driving off of the Whales affects adversely the inshore supply of bait.

The Commission believe that this is not the case though they feel that their conclusion is merely a majority opinion based upon such unscientific evidence as is alone available in this country.

As a question involving the possible enactment of repressive legislation against whaling, it does not appear that under any circumstances there is a present need for such action, seeing that a large number of factories have been forced to abandon the business owing to losses incurred in its prosecution. The controversy is in fact rapidly being settled against the whaling industry by natural means.

The Commission, however, recommend that whaling licenses which have been and are being relinquished, should not be resumed or reissued, until an investigation upon more scientific lines than has been possible for this Commission to make has been instituted, but on the other hand they hold no adequate reasons have been shown to justify the suspension [sic] of licenses for stations now in existence which have arranged for present and prospective operation.

All of which is respectfully submitted for Your Excellency's consideration, by Your Excellency's obedient servants.

A.W. PICCOTT, Chairman  
 JOHN HARRIS  
 JOHN HARVEY (with reservations as above)  
 W.C. JOB  
 M.G. WINTER  
 A.F. GOODRIDGE  
 JAMES RYAN (with reservations as above)  
 PHILIP TEMPLEMAN  
 E.P. MORRIS  
 M.P. CASHIN  
 R. MOULTON  
 A.E. HICKMAN  
 P.T. McGRATH

May 1st, 1915

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