

ful niche in preserving the social history of our island.

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**The Broadcast: the story of
CBC Radio's Fisheries
Broadcast**

Jim Wellman

St. John's: Creative Book Publishing
1997; \$11.95, softcover

Since its humble beginnings in 1951, the *Fisheries Broadcast* has followed the rhythms of post-confederation life in Newfoundland. Despite the title, it is more than a narrow sectoral program, but one which is routinely (even religiously) followed by many people who are unrelated to fisheries. As author Jim

Wellman noted, "it is not a show *for* fishermen and people in the fishing industry; it is a show *about* them" (p. 7).

This book is presented as a roughly chronological series of vignettes about the origins of the program, its influence on the industry, some of the important shifts in its approach, the challenges of covering issues such as sealing, the show's conscious celebration of culture, and the experience of working on the show. Wellman is well placed to provide this commentary, given his 15-year tenure as the host of the program (he retired in 1997).

Wellman also describes the increased complexity of post-moratorium news reporting, where

"spin-doctoring" has compounded the difficulty of getting the story "right." Wellman writes: "it seemed, suddenly, everyone had hidden agendas. . . . Public relations became more important than accuracy, and media manipulation was meticulously plotted in Ottawa and St. John's boardrooms" (p. 169). This is, in itself, evidence that the role of the *Fisheries Broadcast* is now more essential than ever before. Nevertheless, Wellman makes the argument that the enduring promise of the *Broadcast* is that it is not simply a show about an industry, but it is a show about a people and their culture.

Ivan Emke
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