

Engineering Demographic Change: State-assisted Resettlement of Newfoundland Inshore Fishing Communities in the Smallwood Era.

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In Newfoundland, the word ‘resettlement’ evokes strong emotional sentiments decades after the program was abandoned. Many people feel that a heartless government uprooted families who had been living an idyllic lifestyle in an isolated cove or an island off the coast. How did the myth of a cold-hearted state driving people from an Edenic site to a welfare ghetto in a growth pole become part of our historical narrative? Jerry Bannister proposes that to understand how we conceptualize a process such as the implementation of the resettlement program in the 1950s and 1960s we need to consider the ‘use (and misuse) of history.’¹ Bannister also suggests that the creative efforts of novelists, poets, and theatre groups such as Codco have eclipsed the work of historians. Consequently, our view of the past is based more on emotion than historical scholarship. Within the literature of Harold Horwood, Ray Guy and Farley Mowat there was a lament for a lost heritage. The songs of Joe and Pat Byrne, former residents of Little Paradise portrayed resettlement as a ‘government game’. Social scientists Noel Iverson, Ralph Matthews, Cato Wadel, and Ottar Brox produced studies on the social and cultural effects of relocation of Newfoundland outports during the Smallwood era. Although their works were state sponsored, their reports were very critical of both the provincial and the federal-provincial centralization schemes. At the centre of the controversy was J. R. Smallwood, the premier who dedicated more than two decades of his political life to integrating his province into the North American economy. Responding to his critics in 1977, the former premier wrote: “I am proud of our accomplishments in the resettlement developments that we helped people in hundreds of settlements to bring about. It was one of the truly great accomplishments of my Administration.”²

¹Jerry Bannister, “Making History: Cultural Memory in Twentieth Century Newfoundland”, *Newfoundland Studies*, no.18, v. 2 (2002): 175-190, 175.

²J. R. Smallwood, Letter to the Editor, 17 January, 1977, *Decks Awash*, 6, 1 (Feb. 1977): 64.

Opponents of resettlement reconstructed myths that had been long entrenched in Newfoundland's historiography. The invention of Newfoundlanders as an oppressed and persecuted population began with Chief Justice Reeves in the 1790s. It was reinforced in the pamphlets of reformers Dr. William Carson and Patrick Morris and in Judge Prowse's history. The image of the heroic settler who supports a family by engaging in a plural economy while in conflict with drunken fishing admirals dispensing rough justice was embedded into the collective Newfoundland psyche. To add to his woes, the settler had to battle nature and build a home on forbidden ground. The colony that tourist brochures proclaim to be Britain's first was not an ordinary settler colony. In this romantic view, settler families clung to the 'Rock' in defiance of naval governors and parliamentary statutes. Even confederation has been portrayed as a threat to Newfoundland's existence and distinctive culture. Sandra Gwen declared in a *Saturday Night* article: "The old order that produced all of us is being smashed and homogenized, and trivialized out of existence" and she quotes Patrick O'Flaherty as saying writers such as Ray Guy were 'the last of the real Newfoundlanders'."³ while Memorial University's orator, Shane O'Dea, branded Parzival Copes, an economist and promoter of resettlement, as the man who had tried to destroy Newfoundland's "cultural soul" by emptying rural Newfoundland.⁴

The purpose of this work is to illuminate the post-confederation resettlement of Newfoundland outport communities during the 1950s and 1960s by rooting the federal and provincial centralization plans in a high-modernist ideology which underpinned social and economic development models throughout the world. The Newfoundland experience was not an

³Bannister, 180.

⁴Shane O'Dea, "Oration Honouring Parzival Copes", *Gazette*, vol. 37, no. 5 (Nov. 2004): 9.

aberration since it happened to many groups of marginalized people in all regions of Canada and on every inhabited continent. Nonetheless, social scientists have argued that resettlement was not a natural migration of people moving voluntarily to improve their well-being; it was different from the rural to urban migration that normally occurs in all industrial societies because whole communities moved at once.⁵ Evacuation of rural communities, urban renewal and the reordering of nature were projects conceived by high-modernist planners. The engineering of Newfoundland's society and economy was a plan promoted and administered by senior bureaucrats and political leaders after government began to intrude more directly into the lives of its citizens during World War II. During the war the federal Department of Finance assumed a greater role in managing the economy and the Department of Health and Welfare tightened its control over social policy. These developments legitimized a more intrusive role for the state in economic and social planning. Modern state planners shared a faith in science and technology to create a better world for all.⁶ Smallwood considered the plural economy underpinned by household production to be symbols of the province's economic and social backwardness. The elevation Newfoundland society to a North American standard of living would require a closure of hundreds of communities and transfer of production from families to corporate enterprises. Fishers were imagined as 'folk' living on the fringe of civilization, glorified for their independence and creativity, but considered the antithesis of modernity. Political leaders and expert bureaucrats set out to rehabilitate rural Newfoundland by moving them into a more

⁵Ralph Matthews, "The Sociological Implications of Resettlement: Some Thoughts on the Powers and Responsibilities of Planners", Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Institute of Planners, Halifax, N. S., 1987, 3.

⁶James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 4.

industrialized urban environment where they would develop “appropriate habits of mind” that would enable them to become productive citizens. Left in their own communities, the rural population would never rise above an impoverished existence. Smallwood believed the saltfish trade enslaved the fishermen and kept fishing families in a perpetual state of poverty, indebtedness, and ignorance. When high modernism ideology became hegemonic in the 1950-70 period, modernists began to implement a program of modernization that required rationalizing the fishery through a program of centralization and industrialization. Historian Miriam Wright argues that when the high-modernist goals coalesced with the interests of the state, projects acquired an authoritative dimension that left local people powerless.⁷ By the 1950s a coterie of experts - planners, engineers, architects, scientists and technicians - began to implement a program to shift Newfoundland’s scattered population into centres where they could be integrated into the North American economy. David Alexander suggested that in both St John’s and Ottawa bureaucrats questioned whether the sale of a low-value food commodity, sold in poor-country markets, could ever generate enough wealth to raise the standard of living of rural Newfoundlanders to an acceptable level.⁸ Economists who had risen to positions of power and influence at the federal and provincial level contended that only by switching from a saltfishery to a fresh-frozen product sold in North American markets would the fishery generate enough revenue to permit the population to enjoy a decent standard of living. To make their vision a reality, the experts embarked on a revolutionary social engineering mission. Through the provincial Centralization Plan (1953-65) and the federal - provincial Fisheries Household Resettlement

⁷Miriam Wright, *A Fishery for Modern Times: The State and the Industrialization of the Newfoundland Fishery, 1934-1968*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁸David Alexander, *Decay Of Trade*, (St. John’s: ISER, 1977).

Program (1965-70), political leaders and bureaucrats in St. John's and Ottawa set out to not only to alter the mode of production, but also to improve the productivity of fishers by shifting the locus of production from households to fish factories. Execution of these two plans would require evacuation of up to 800 fishing communities. By this process highly capitalized integrated-trawler-processing companies would capture the labour of resettled fishing families.

Just as Newfoundland's late 19th century program of economic diversification had been modelled on Canada's National Policy, the model adopted for modernization of the fishing industry was a plan developed for centralization of Nova Scotia's fisheries in 1944. The plan was fully endorsed by Gordon Bradley, Newfoundland's first federal cabinet minister, who expressed a strong faith in the ability of engineers and scientists to solve development problems. Reacting to the formation of the Newfoundland Fisheries Development Committee he suggested "The problem of the Newfoundland fishery ... was one for scientists and engineers, 'to be solved in the laboratory ... not in the committee room.'"⁹ It was a faith shared by a premier determined to avert a mass migration of Newfoundlanders to the Canadian mainland in pursuit of employment in industrial Canada. Consequently Smallwood began his "develop or perish" strategy of industrial development which embraced a theory of development applied in underdeveloped countries on several continents.¹⁰ These strategies relied on outside expertise, imported technology and a government willing to act as a driving force.

The Newfoundland Fisheries Development Committee Report (1953), hereafter the Walsh Report, recommended abandonment of the old inshore saltfishery in favour of a more

⁹Raymond Blake, *Canadians At Last: Canada Integrates Newfoundland as a Province*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 166.

¹⁰Gerhard Bassler, "Develop or Perish," in James Hiller and Peter Neary, eds., *Twentieth Century*

modern industrial fishery that would be prosecuted by men in decked boats while freezers would replace fish flakes, the ultimate symbol of a primitive society. Walsh reported industrialization would free women and children from the servitude of the fishery. Women could retreat from a public role in the market economy to their desired feminine role of nurturing and homemaking; children would be free to attend to their schooling. In conformity with modernist ideology, the Walsh Report imagined women as homemakers and consumers rather than commercial producers. Domestic production- spinning yarn, knitting, sewing clothing for family use, tending the garden - conformed to the modernist ideals of femininity. Through a program of modernization primitive, illiterate, superstitious populations could be transformed into rational beings. William Black who completed a study of the northwest coast for ARDA proposed shifting populations from coastal 'rock crannies' into a half dozen larger centres where fishers utilizing a fleet of longliners could supply plants at Norris Point, Port au Choix, St. Barbe, and St. Anthony. Black recommended the state maintain full control over the whole operation of moving and resettling the householder.¹¹ Resettlement programs aimed to move people from the fringes of civilization into a more urban setting where a 'more orderly arrangement of housing' equipped with modern amenities would ease integration of a backward society into North American consumer society. Parzival Copes suggested the transition should be conducted in several stages requiring multiple uprooting of populations. Modernist cultural ideals which shaped the ideology of social and economic development projects in Africa, Asia, and South America also shaped the thinking of bureaucrats whose radical interventions in rural

Newfoundland: Explorations, (St. John's: Breakwater, 1994), 102.

¹¹W. A. Black, *Fishery Utilization on the St. Barbe Coast of Newfoundland* (Ottawa: Geographical Branch, Department of Mines and Technical Surveys, 1966, ARDA Study, 1043), 4.

Newfoundland led to the evacuation of 230 communities and changed the lives of 30,000 people.

Much of the anti-resettlement rhetoric portrayed the resettled population as victims of a powerful state and ignored local participation in the process. It is unlikely that politicians and bureaucrats exercised total control over passive subjects. Census data supports claims that people resettled without financial assistance long before confederation. Transhumance has always been a part of the Newfoundland experience as they moved from headland to bottom of bays and fiords, at first seasonally and later permanently. The movement of families from established overcrowded outports into the next suitable harbour led to the creation of over 1,300 communities scattered along the coastline. The willingness of people to move to industrial centres since the beginning of the 20th century also suggests a desire to resettle in centres with modern amenities and a chance for wage labour. So many Newfoundlanders were leaving the fishery for construction work on military bases that the Commission Government became alarmed. The Commission feared fishermen having deserted the fishery would have no means to return to it when the construction boom ended.¹² Anthropologists caution that while governments may have the welfare of the population, the improvement of their condition and material well-being as its purpose, the state may arrange things so people will “do as they ought.” A population may not always be aware of how their conduct is being conducted or why, so the question of consent may not arise. In a review of the work of Noel Iverson and Ralph Matthews, Ottar Brox, Cato Wadel, and R. L. DeWitt, anthropologist Jim Lotz drew two conclusions: first inadequate attention was paid to informing people about the program, and secondly the people of the outports are nobody’s fools - they worked the programs to get

¹² Steven High, “Working for Uncle Sam in Newfoundland,” *Base Colonies in the Western Hemisphere*,

maximum benefits for themselves.¹³ They were not pawns shuffled about by ruthless bureaucrats and politicians. Nonetheless, Brox raised the question of inducement becoming pressure to move as financial compensation quadrupled under the Fisheries Household Resettlement Program. Correspondence in the J. R. Smallwood Collection upholds provincial government's claim that the impetus for the Centralization Plan came from a rural population that wanted to move from the islands of Bonavista Bay to the main. Constituents wrote the premier, district MHAs, and consulted welfare officers in an effort to get financial support to cover moving expenses. Pre-1954 government limited its involvement to providing a tractor to launch a house or pull it from the shore. The standard reply of the premier to persons asking if they would have to move stated that government was prepared to assist only those communities in which all residents petitioned for assistance to relocate. Nonetheless, he always included in his letters the procedures to follow in order to qualify for government assistance to vacate a community.

On March 23, 1953, cabinet vested in the Minister of Public Welfare the authority compensate householders for moving expenses up to a maximum of \$300 upon presentation of receipts provided 100% of residents agreed to vacate the community. The stream of demands for improved marine transport, roads, telecommunications, schools, and other public services pressured Smallwood into action. The cost of bringing basic services to over 1,200 communities spread over 6,000 miles of coastline threatened to overwhelm the fiscal capacity of Canada's newest province. Planners adopted the policy of assisting population moves to services as the most rational approach to ending isolation and an antiquated lifestyle. Smallwood informed his

1940-1967, (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009).

¹³Jim Lotz, "Resettlement and Social Change in Newfoundland," *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 8,1 (1971): 48-59.

biographer Richard Gwyn that his travels in Bonavista North in the early 1930s convinced him of the need to relieve the poverty and indebtedness of rural families through fisheries reform. Smallwood was convinced that the saltfishery, as it was conducted by inshore fishers in the 1950s, offered little hope for either a more profitable industry or improved living conditions for the fishing population. This belief, shared in both St. John's and Ottawa, led government to invest millions of dollars to build up a corporate fresh/frozen fishery while offering limited financial support to the inshore fishery.¹⁴ Smallwood's preferred to sink tens of millions of dollars into creation of an industrial fishery while failing to invest in improving the quality, processing, and marketing of saltfish. In the early 1950s Colin Storey, a Department of Fisheries and Co-operatives official, argued that investing in large steel trawlers made little economic sense because these vessels could never employ all the labour displaced from the inshore sector. Opposing this line of thought, Copes argued a rational approach to fisheries development required a plan to move fishing labour from inshore to near shore and offshore utilizing decked boats. Those displaced by the shift from skiff to dragger could be profitably employed in the corporate fish plants. In 1963, 700 trawlermen landed one third of the total provincial catch while the balance was caught by 24,407 inshore fishers.¹⁵ Copes' plan also required a separation of harvesting and processing and the placement of large trawler-processing plants in strategic locations around the coast. Centralization of the population into welfare ghettos with few opportunities for employment made no sense except it provided opportunities for training the

¹⁴See David Alexander, *Decay of Trade: A History of the Newfoundland Saltfish Trade, 1935-1965* (St. John's: ISER, 1977) and Miriam Wright, *A Fishery for Modern Times: The State and the Industrialization of the Newfoundland Fishery*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁵James E. Candow, "Recurring Visitations of Pauperism: Change and Continuity in the Newfoundland Fishery," in James E. Candow and Carol Corbin, eds., *How Deep is the Ocean: Historical Essays on Canada's*

younger generation for jobs in industrial Canada. He believed the success of any modernization program depended on the willingness of the state to export surplus labour to central Canada. He concluded the pre-conditions for integration of the outport population into the industrial society had been met by 1970.¹⁶ The high number of young educated Newfoundlanders emigrating to Ontario and other provinces in the 1960s, with or without assistance, supports his conclusion.

While many were willing to trumpet the benefits of resettlement and fisheries modernization, few expressed concern for the sustainability of the resource. Pressure on stocks in the 19th century forced fishers of the northeast coast to expand into Labrador. By the 1950s the Labrador fishery had declined so sharply that many communities of Bonavista Bay were in crisis. Fishers in island settlements were especially vulnerable to successive years of failure on the Labrador. They responded by requesting government assistance to move to the main where they would have better access to other employment, be close enough to fish traditional grounds, take advantage of better schooling for their children and better medical services for all. By the end of the decade nearly all of the islands of Bonavista Bay had moved to larger centres or were connected by causeways to the main. Between 1953 and 1958 most households received less than \$300 in compensation, and letters to the premier from rural communities demonstrate widespread dissatisfaction with it. In 1957, frustrated by the slow pace of centralization, Smallwood appointed a special sub-committee of cabinet to oversee a province-wide survey to determine which communities were likely to resettle and identify suitable reception centres.

Atlantic Fishery, (Sydney: University of Cape Breton, 1997): 139-160, 149.

¹⁶Parzival Copes, *The Resettlement of Fishing Communities in Newfoundland*, (Ottawa: The Canadian Council on Rural Development, 1972), 91.

Clergy, welfare officers, magistrates, doctors, nurses, and school supervisors were given responsibility for identifying and recommending communities for resettlement.¹⁷ The surveyors produced an extensive list of communities from all but the most urban areas of the province. To speed up the process a revised plan offered assistance to a maximum of \$600 per household if all householders of a community agreed to move. The provincial economist, Robert Wells, produced a pamphlet outlining the procedures to be followed by communities applying for assistance under the new centralization plan. Increased financial support did speed up the closure of communities, but the premier felt that if resettlement continued at the current rate it would take 200 years to relocate the most rural populations. But in a statement announcing the formation of the cabinet sub-committee Smallwood optimistically suggested as many as 10,000 families might move. The Report of the South Coast Commission (1957) classified many settlements between Cape Ray and Arnold's Cove in Placentia Bay as demoralized and unviable.¹⁸ J. T. Cheeseman, the chair of the Commission and future provincial fisheries minister, believed there was no option except to move people from the most demoralized settlements where rehabilitation of the population appeared unlikely into one of several south coast ports with fish plants. He felt money spent in declining communities merely slowed the abandonment of settlements and prolonged their existence in extreme poverty. The Commission reported that an average of 400 inshore fishermen per year were abandoning the industry to move to other areas of the province and the Canadian mainland.¹⁹ The message sent to

¹⁷A. G. Stacey Collection, Archives and Documents Division, QE II Library (St John's: Memorial University).

¹⁸Newfoundland, *Report of the South Coast Commission*, 1957, (St. John's: 1957).

¹⁹Newfoundland, *Report*, 135.

government and the coastal population was clear: Don't waste any more money providing services to dying communities. The Commission cautioned that rehabilitation of the south coast economy through movement of the population into growth centres would require federal co-operation. Clergy and government officials in the region supported the Commission's assessment. One parish priest reported that he had already closed out five communities on the west side of Placentia Bay without any assistance.²⁰ Nonetheless, most Placentia Bay island communities, except Sound Island, and those without a road link to the Burin highway on the main, held out until the federal and provincial legislatures passed the Resettlement Act in April, 1965 which replaced the Centralization Plan with the more controversial Fisheries Household Resettlement Program (FHRP). In 1970 Woody Island was the only remaining settled island in Placentia Bay. The rapid depopulation of Placentia Bay islands and the communities without a road link to the Burin highway supports Ralph Matthews contention that the people in the grip of "moving fever" panicked. Patrick J. Canning, MHA, believed the move from Port Elizabeth to Red Harbour was the only organized move in Placentia Bay under the FHRP.²¹

Sociologist D. Ralph Matthews suggests the failure of officials to provide information allowed rumour take hold instilling panic in the communities. His examination of householders' applications showed that applicants often neglected to identify a reception centre to which they wished to relocate.²² The socially vibrant communities of Tack's Beach, Harbour Buffett and Merasheen which had shown no inclination to resettle disappeared within a few months of the petition being taken up. Deputy Minister of Fisheries had planned to make Merasheen and

²⁰Letter from Father Collins to the Cabinet Sub-Committee, 1957. A. G. Stacey Collection.

²¹*Decks Awash*. 6, 12 (Feb1977).

²²D. Ralph Matthews, "Communities in Transition: An Examination of Government Initiated Community

Arnold's Cove reception centres for the region. Saltfish and fresh fish plants were constructed and large amounts were invested in developing the harbour and diesel electrification. But in the headlong rush to the mainland, Merasheen was forgotten. Between 1965 and 1969 thirty communities disappeared from the islands and west side of Placentia Bay. All places without a road connection to the Burin highway except Southeast Bight, Monkstown, and Petite Forte, became ghost towns.²³ At Petite Forte Canning told the people they would never have a road connection, electricity or phones. While some families decided to move to the isthmus of the Avalon where a proposed industrial complex offered hope for employment. When the region proved not to be the Promised Land, reports of unemployment halted the evacuation and left Petite Forte in an indeterminate state. Five years of uncertainty drained the community of social vitality. Residents, fearing they would have to leave sooner or later, refused to invest in the upkeep of either communal or private property. In 1971 the Progressive Conservative candidate, Leo Barry, made a commitment to the people of Petite Forte that a PC government would services to the people rather than forcing communities to relocate to growth centres.

The increase in pace of resettlement can be demonstrated by comparing the number of assisted moves under the two programs. Under the Centralization Plan (1953-65), the Smallwood administration assisted the evacuation of 115 communities and relocated 7,500 persons. In just five years the FHRP closed 119 communities and relocated 16,114 people By 1975 the total

Migration in Rural Newfoundland," (University of Minnesota, PhD Thesis).

²³Leslie Harris, "Placentia Bay," *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, v. 4 (ST. John's: Harry Cuff Publishers, 1993): 320-330. See also Peter Gard, "Outport Resettlement Twenty Years Later." *Canadian Geographic*, 105,3 (June/July, 1985): 7-18 and "Ghost Outports of Placentia Bay," *Atlantic Insight*, 8,2 (February, 1986).

numbers were: 200 communities closed and 28,000 people relocated.²⁴ In all the resettlement programs oversaw the closure of 25% of Newfoundland's communities and the movement of 10% of the province's population.²⁵

An Economic Council of Canada report claimed that while government assistance was small and numbers moved at their own request, the centralization program attracted little opposition. Council reported that once government began to pursue the a more vigorous policy of moving people "some against their will - to places of government's choosing, whether or not jobs were available there, the program foundered, leaving a bitterness that future governments will ignore at their peril."²⁶ The question of whether people were moving voluntarily or were being forced to abandon their homes became an important part of the debate surrounding the resettlement programs. Herbert Pottle, a former official in the Commission Government in the late 1940s and a minister in the Smallwood government, stated that a mass upheaval of population by the state could only be justified in times of extreme emergency such as war. Political scientist S. J. R. Noel, who believed the state was not overly intrusive, contended a vote for confederation had been a vote for integration into North American industrial capitalism.²⁷ In his opinion it was better to be unemployed in an urban setting "than underemployed in a remote hamlet ...with its tangle of fishermen's cottages."²⁸ Ralph Matthews describes it as the greatest peacetime migration of people in the history of Canada and he recounted its traumatic effect on resettlers. He compared it to the trauma experienced by survivors of a natural disaster, such as an

²⁴Economic Council of Canada, *Newfoundland: From Dependence to Self-Reliance*, (Ottawa: 1980), 14.

²⁵Ralph Matthews, "The Outport Breakup," *Horizon Canada*, 102, (1987): 2438.

²⁶Economic Council of Canada, *Newfoundland*, 14.

²⁷S. J. R. Noel, *Politics in Newfoundland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 263.

²⁸Noel, *Politics in Newfoundland*, 264.

earthquake or tsunami. However, he did not feel that resettled people were pawns moved about at will by an all-powerful state. Matthews purports that island dwellers believed life on the main was better than on their island. The Arnold's Cove merchant, the Burin plant manager, and officials from the Resettlement Division who exaggerated employment opportunities in growth centres, created a sense of isolation and deprivation that produced a moving fever.²⁹ At Hooping Harbour, White Bay, the local pastor led his people from a prime fishing location to a new settlement on the shores of Bide Arm which was poorly situated for prosecuting the fishery and offered no alternate employment. Some moved out of fear of being stranded in a vacated community without any services. The ten remaining families in Hooping Harbour sent letters to their MHA and the premier expressing concern over possible loss of the school and post office, and the actual loss of the community stage which had been shifted to Bide Arm.³⁰ The final evacuation of Hooping Harbour could hardly be classified as voluntary. For journalist Ray Guy "it was one of the greatest crimes committed against the Newfoundland people,"³¹ while Farley Mowat considered it a tragedy equivalent to the Highland clearances in Scotland.³² Smallwood insisted that the initiative to move had to come from the people. The government had no "no policy of centralizing or resettling the population. What it had was a policy of [assisting] those who expressed a positive and sincere wish to move."³³

In "Voices from the Outports" John Gushue described resettlement as one of the most

²⁹Ralph Matthews, "Communities in Transition," 464.

³⁰Edward M. Roberts Collection, Documents and Archives, Memorial University.

³¹Ray Guy, *That Far Greater Bay*, (Portugal Cove: Breakwater, 1976), 54.

³²Farley Mowat, "The People of the Coasts," *Atlantic Advocate*, 57, 11 (July 1967): 49-56.

³³Smallwood, Letter to Editor, *Decks Awash*, 6,1 (Feb 1977): 64.

ambitious and controversial social engineering experiments in Canadian history.³⁴ In 2001 Gushue asked five people who had been resettled in the 1950s and 1960s for their feelings on resettlement. Although Beulah Crowley, a retired teacher formerly of Exploits, considered it a natural migration, she recalled it causing fear among the elderly, but the children had no choice if they wanted to progress beyond grade ten. Crowley is in agreement with Smallwood who said he was motivated by a “powerful wish to help the children” in communities where no qualified teacher, nurse or doctor was prepared to go.³⁵ Anita Best, a folklorist and entertainer born at Merasheen, recalled how the priests promoted resettlement from the altar by concentrating on the benefits for young children. She also felt that cash grants were an inducement in low-income areas. After the move to St. John’s, Best reported, her mother suffered loneliness and her father became bitter. She mourns the devaluation of her culture: “...our heads were wrenched away from an appreciation of our own way of life ... that was the worst of it - being ashamed of being a Newfoundlander and being from the outports.”³⁶ Pat Byrne formerly of Great Paradise stated bluntly: “Resettlement was an insidious operation because they targeted ... the merchant, the priest or minister, and the school.” A community that thrived for 200 years was reduced the “stuff of legend and poetry.”³⁷ He regretted the loss of traditional skills and outport way of life. He ignores the fact that the merchant of Spencer’s Cove and Barhaven each abandoned their respective community leaving people stranded on an island depriving them of a necessary service. Arthur Wicks, who moved from Port Nelson, Bonavista Bay in 1956, declared: “To take

³⁴ John Gushue, “Voices from the Outports,” *Maclean’s Magazine*, (August 13, 2001): 24-28.

³⁵ Smallwood, Letter to Editor, *Decks Awash*, 6,1 (Feb 1977): 64.

³⁶ Gushue, 26.

³⁷ Gushue, 26, 27.

someone and put them in a welfare state in an inland town, well, it was like somebody had stuck a knife between their two shoulder blades.”³⁸ Archivist Heather Wareham, formerly of Spencer’s Cove, Placentia Bay, stated her community had a ferry connection to Arnold’s Cove, a mail service, and electricity. Her father’s decision to move his business to Arnold’s Cove was the most important reason for abandoning Spencer’s Cove. While her father hit the ground running and the children favoured the move, Wareham her mother cried every day for ten years. Anthropologist Ottar Brox questioned the need to sacrifice one generation in order to improve the next.

People in different regions responded differently to post-confederation centralization programs. For example implementation of the FHRP resulted in the closure of nearly all communities without a road connection in the electoral district of Placentia West while leaving most of Twillingate district’s island communications undisturbed. Ecological differences may have played a part. I suggest local conditions must be considered when studying resettlement. An ice-free Placentia Bay could be industrialized more easily than a bay closed to shipping for several months each year. Deep channels in Placentia Bay give the largest ocean-going ships year-round access to such deep-water ports of Mortier Bay and Come by Chance. Smallwood hoped to capitalize on this resource to expand the industrial fishery on the Burin Peninsula and construct an industrial complex on the isthmus of Avalon. His development plans for Mortier Bay and the isthmus went far beyond plants to produce frozen cod blocks. He planned a state-of-the-art shipbuilding facility for Marystown to construct a fleet of steel stern trawlers to supply the corporate fishery with raw material year-round. For the port of Come by Chance he announced

³⁸Gushue, 28.

the construction of a paper mill, an oil refinery, a possible petrochemical industry, and a phosphorous electric reduction plant. Premature announcements and exaggerated estimates of future employment generated a strong desire to move. When an opportunity for moving into wage labour coincided with the inducement of the FHRP, the desire to move became irresistible. Awareness of modern amenities in the near mainland communities instilled in island residents a sense of isolation and deprivation. Newfoundlanders are no more immune to modernity than citizens of the western world. Those who favoured resettlement circulated the petitions and people, who had left the community up to a year before the petition was circulated, not only had a legal right to sign it, but under the Resettlement Act could be assisted retroactively.

This policy applied in all parts of the province. Perhaps the explanation for Twillingate District's negative response to the FHRP can be found in its history. Here the FPU found its strongest supporters who valued the possibilities collective action presented. The presence of Union Trading Company stores on the northeast coast reinforced in the minds of the fishermen the importance of co-operation. When plants operated by corporations failed, fishermen were willing to form co-operatives and petition the government for support. Unlike the south coast bank fishery which encouraged cutthroat competition which left crewmen hardly speaking to each other, the seal fishery brought hundreds of sealers together on a vessel where they acquired a class consciousness which was reinforced in the woods camps. Co-operation replaced stubborn independence when Memorial University Extension workers arrived on Fogo Island in 1968. Unlike communities that had succumbed to the temptation to take the money and resettle on the main, the communities on Fogo Island, Twillingate, and Change Islands resisted. A fisherman on Change Islands told the Extension field worker that moving to Lewisporte was "too foolish to

talk about.” When it became clear they could not rely on outside investors the fishers became shareholders in a co-operative and created a model for community development that challenged the assumptions that underpinned modernization theory. The positive model of development developed by MUN Extension for the Fogo Island experiment achieved international recognition.

In 1970 the first five-year resettlement federal-provincial agreement expired. During the term a number of changes were made to the FHRP: August 1966, the percentage of community householders agreeing to move was reduced from 90% to 80%; the high cost of lots and housing in growth centres led to granting of an additional \$3,000 to acquire serviced lots in fisheries growth centres and \$1,000 in other designated centres; and from 1967 the FHRP provided assistance to individual householders moving to ‘other’ specified growth centres; and provision was made to assist widows, the infirm and the aged to relocate for humane reasons. In 1966 a Resettlement Division within the newly created Department of Community and Social Development took over provincially. At the federal level the Department of Fisheries remained in charge of the program until 1970 when the Department of Regional Economic Expansion assumed responsibility for resettlement. In 1973 DREE minister Don Jamieson announced that government would focus on assisting individual moves to growth centres rather than evacuation of communities.³⁹ He also stated DREE was willing to create “a number seasonal fishing centres” to assist fishers to return to traditional fishing grounds. In the same year Premier Frank Moores informed PC Association that no one would again be forced to move their homes and no community will be designated for resettlement.⁴⁰ A program of resettlement, which Smallwood

³⁹Don Jamieson, “Notes from an Address by Don Jamieson, Minister of DREE, to a St John’s Rotary Club Meeting, (1973): 17-18.

⁴⁰“Ottawa Agrees to Plans to Cancel Outport Move,” *The Times News* (Apr 30, 1973). A. G. Stacey Coll.

refused to admit ever existed, ended in victory for the anti-modernists. Of course, urbanization continued in Newfoundland, just as it has in all parts of the world. However, the unnatural movement of people by closing out whole communities came to an end. Resettlement and all that the term connotes has become anathema to politicians. While the modernist vision of an industrial fishery was dominant in the 1950s and 1960s, modernization theory lost its appeal in the 1970s when it became identified with colonialism. The negative reaction of young delegates at the Liberal leadership convention to Smallwood's victory stemmed in part from public dissatisfaction with his modernization schemes and foreshadowed the end of Liberal rule. Following Smallwood's defeat, the great social engineering experiment which led to the closure of over 200 communities and the uprooting of nearly 30,000 persons may have taken a less radical tack, but state-assisted depopulation of rural communities continues has continued into the 21st century.