

Cashin debates Morrow

N.S., NFLD. could have problems

by Greg Morgan

"The Future of the Atlantic Fisheries in the Eighties" was hotly debated at the Weldon Law Hour last Thursday, but the two protagonists, Richard Cashin of the Newfoundland Food, Fish, and Allied Workers Union and J.B. Morrow, vice-president of National Sea Products, could find little ground for common agreement.

Since Morrow and Cashin have met—and disagreed—frequently over the course of several bargaining negotiations, the conflict was hardly surprising. What was new—and interesting—was the strong hint that part of their disagreement stemmed from the fact that Cashin is a Newfoundlander and Morrow is a Nova Scotian.

One should avoid interpreting the complicated conflicts in the Atlantic Fisheries as a confrontation between the diverging interests of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. Unfortunately, contrasts between the neighbours make that interpretation seem fairly plausible. For instance, although the island catches more fish, Nova Scotia's catch is of higher quality and therefore makes more money. This province has a far bigger trawler fleet, and its governments usually show greater sympathy for large fishing companies. Furthermore, at a time when diplomatic and ecological problems threaten

to force Nova Scotia's fleet off the Georges Bank and the Scotian Shelf respectively, Newfoundland happens to be pressing Ottawa for full control of access to the remaining fishing areas. These include the Grand Banks and the northern cod grounds off Labrador.

Mr. Morrow argued the economic necessity of big companies. When technology introduced the freezer and the diesel engine into the industry back in the 30's, small fishermen could no longer afford to buy and insure competitive boats. Hence, many sold their vessels to the growing fishing companies, sometimes receiving a share of the firm's control in return. During the same years, Stewart Bates wrote a paper recommending the merger of small companies into larger ones. This, it was hoped, would reduce mutually harmful competition and pool the resources needed to advertise and market nationally. National Sea Products itself was created out of two lesser enterprises. Today, integrated fishing companies run their own fleets, purchase fish from small fishermen, and process the product themselves. In spite of modern distrust of big business, Morrow suggested, the original need has not disappeared.

The companies, he said, take the sensible approach to fishing: They try to develop a market and then proceed to

match the amount caught to the amount demanded. Unions and small fishermen, on the other hand, seem inclined to strive for big catches, whether or not the market can absorb them. The big businesses justify themselves as the only entities capable of finding a place in a vast, complicated world market. They point to problems involving investment, broking arrangements, and currency changes.

Morrow rejected any suggestion that National-Nickerson, which handles something like 30% of the Atlantic catch, is a monopoly. He claimed that both buyers and sellers abounded, and that small rivals of huge companies had shown they could compete favourably.

The companies resent a certain commercial practise known as the "over-the-side-sale". This occurs when a small fisherman loads his unprocessed fish into a foreign freezer-trawler at sea. While the foreigners pay a better price, the practise could deprive Canadians of capital and work, if taken to extremes. Because the foreign ships have less overhead and pay no taxes, they can offer stiff competition which could double the prices that must be paid by native plants. Morrow believes this is unfair and harmful, and the Nova Scotia Fisheries Department agrees with him.

Cashin recognizes the pos-

sibility of these dangers but doubts whether they would in fact arise. This is not altogether a disinterested view, since his own union has negotiated over-the-side-sales. However, he said the union only resumed talks the private sector had dropped, and, in the end, won a price 50% higher than the companies would have been paid. Only surpluses the local plants couldn't process were sold, and the money went into services the companies had to pay into anyway. He cited the example of a pension plan for fishermen. The sales won wide popular support among the people of Newfoundland.

Mr. Cashin is the founder and president of a remarkable organization called the Newfoundland Food, Fish, and Allied Workers Union (NFFAWU). It draws its members from all parts of the fishing industry: self-employed inshore fishermen, who usually sell their catches to the plants; the shore workers; and the crews of deep-sea trawlers. The men in the last group earn a share of what they catch. This makes them "co-adventurers", and therefore ineligible for union membership in some of the other provinces. Besides bargaining for contracts, the union concerns itself with regulations and licencing policy, and has a committee on fish quality and marketing.

Excepting a handful of

species, the age of free-for-all fishing has passed into history. In the past five years, Newfoundland has grown gradually aware of the importance of allocating and managing fish-stocks, although the deep-rooted tradition of a completely free fishery has resisted that awareness. When restricted licencing is coupled with improved technology, the number of fishermen is greatly reduced, but their individual salaries double or triple. Cashin warns that this may be a foretaste of a brand of elitism which Newfoundland will not tolerate. He believes that fishermen should participate in drawing up licencing policy.

The Maritime fishermen have not organized as well or as effectively as those of Newfoundland. Could they? The island's politics and economy favour the existence of the NFFAWU. It has a more scattered population and fewer trawlers than does Nova Scotia: in order to win, politicians must gain the confidence of the numerous small fishermen. Cashin believes that Newfoundlanders have always considered themselves an exploited people. Only a generation or two ago, the local merchant generally held his outport in semi-feudal subjection. Perhaps history and geography have not paved the way for a similarly unified Maritime fishermen's union.

Mentally retarded need your aid

by Pam Berman

Many mentally retarded people in Halifax are being denied or are doing without their basic rights, needs or interests. The Citizen's Advocacy is an organization that wants to overcome this problem by matching up volunteer advocates with mentally retarded 'protégés'.

Bill Grant, the main organizer of Halifax's Citizen's Advocacy, says that there are presently twenty-one advocates in the Halifax area all working in a one to one relationship with a selected protégé. There is a long waiting list for an advocate however, and in many cases there are protégés that are in desperate need of either informal emotional support or formal representation of one type or another.

"Protégés are often preferred by social service groups such as group homes or workshops, but some have just heard of the advocate idea from a co-worker or a friend from their group home, and one of the major frustrations of my job is seeing a person who could use help immediately and having to keep them waiting until we can find a volunteer to meet this person's needs," Bill Grant stated.

An advocate can basically be a friend for the protégé providing another avenue of support, someone else to turn to besides the professionals that are in the group homes and institutionalized settings.

This especially applies to people who have been in institutions all their lives and who have no family or friends outside this environment. The advocate can also supplement the efforts of the social services groups by covering details that can be overlooked or unhandled.

"The main role of an advocate as I see it is the promotion of normalization as much as possible for each protégé," said Jefflyn Batherston, one of the citizen advocates.

Each mentally retarded person, in view of Citizen Advocacy, has abilities that can be developed given the right kind of help and encouragement. The initiation of decisions and interests would lead to the possibility of a fuller and more normal life for many mentally retarded people.

Volunteers are trained by the Citizen Advocacy office before a protégé is matched up with them. This is mainly to build up the confidence of the volunteer as well as make them aware of the facilities available not only for the protégés but also the ones that are helpful for the volunteer to use.

"The most common fear of new volunteers is that they feel they aren't 'experts' which is a false assumption about the abilities that will be used, in most situations just common sense judgments are needed," Grant explained.

In any case, the Citizen Advocacy office uses a committee of skilled resource

people to support the new advocate in every way. The advocate never has to feel

isolated from help or information concerning his/her protégé's problems.

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