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Fishermen forced to negate actions

by Martin Langille

Last month, the seven-month strike of Canso Strait fishermen was concluded when trawler fishermen signed an "agreement" with Booth Fisheries of Petit de Grat and Acadia Fisheries of Mulgrave and Canso.

One of the issues raised by this strike, as in other strikes, is the granting of court injunctions forbidding picketing of plant sites. This tactic, so often employed by the companies with the ready compliance of the Courts, denies workers their most effective bargaining weapon — the ability to withdraw their labour power and prevent the company from bringing in scab labour to replace them. Even after much of the storm and publicity roused by the fishermen's strike has died down and the strike ended, the legal repercussions of the injunctions are still being felt by the fishermen.

In June of this year, Chief Justice Gordon Cowan sentenced fishermen to jail terms of 20 and 30 days for defying a Court injunction ordering them to stop picketing fish plants in Canso, Mulgrave and Petit de Grat. But the fishermen, always a bit suspicious of the efficacy of Judicial Wisdom, displayed a most irreligious disregard for the Divine Inspiration of the Courts, declaring instead that they were quite ready to go to jail rather than give up their rights or abandon their principles.

This act of heresy caused Our Lady of Justice such a fit of apoplexy that She actually dropped Her precious Scales. Justice Cowan, in an attempt to teach the Labour movement the peril of defying the edicts of the Supreme Court, sentenced fisherman Everett Richardson to nine months in jail.

A new reign of Inquisitorial Terror appeared imminent for the rest of the fishermen still awaiting trial. Fortunately, however, 7,500 workers throughout the province, having observed the distress in which Lady Justice found herself, walked off their jobs in an effort to rouse the Justice Department to Her assistance. Finally awakened, the Attendants of Justice managed to gather up the Scales and restore them, albeit in a somewhat battered condition, to their Lady's hand.

The sentences were suspended pending a Supreme Court appeal, and the Justice Department went back to sleep, having forgotten, as usual, to restore the damaged

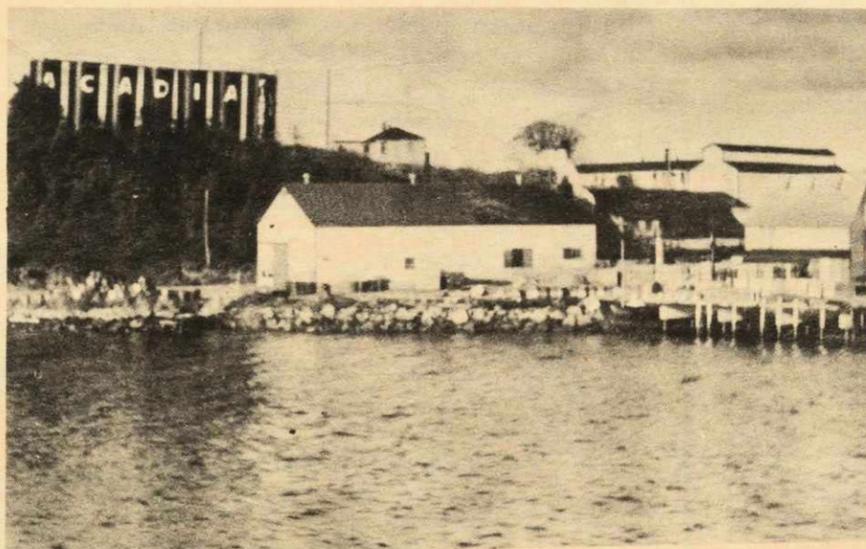
Scales to their proper condition.

The fishermen are now back at work, having eeked out a meagre settlement from the fish companies. But the Court proceedings still remain. The replacing of the old Attendants of Justice with a new entourage has left the Justice Department remarkably unchanged, and the High Priests of Justice remain as they were, their ruffled dignity beginning to re-assert itself now that the attention of the public has been removed from them.

On Monday, Nov. 23, three inshore fishermen were back in Court on the same contempt charges, again facing Chief Justice Cowan. Justice Cowan demanded that the fishermen either apologize to the Court, on the grounds that they had not known what they were doing when they defied the injunction, or face new sentences. This, in spite of the fact that the fishermen had already gone on record during the previous trials stating that they knew exactly what they were doing. They were fighting for their rights against a biased system of Justice. It is the Courts themselves not the fishermen who are ignorant of this fact. Like Galileo at the hands of the Inquisition the fishermen were asked, in effect, to commit purgury or face sentence.

The fishermen were given time to leave the courtroom and make their decision. There were several considerations to be made: the possibility of jail sentences if

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Acadia's Mulgrave plant was one of the centers of a seven month fishermen's strike this year. The strike is now over, but the effects linger on.

Disputes over hiring

Sociology splits

The widely-heralded student parity system in the Sociology department appears to be in trouble.

Despite chairman Don Clairmont's optimism in last week's Gazette that "parity will help in the debureaucratization" of department policies, the faculty's hiring of UBC graduate Peter Clark on Friday over stiff student opposition has caused open divisions in the department.

A Sociology Students' Course Union meeting has been called for today (Dec. 3) to discuss the apparent break-down in decision-making and decide what position the union will take.

Students have parity within departmental meetings and its committees on all issues except hiring and firing of faculty and evaluation of students.

But the hiring of new faculty — as many as seven may be added — has become the central issue facing the department this year and many students think that faculty are making arbitrary, unilateral decisions.

The conflict flared Tuesday when the Students Union representatives presented a motion to the department asking that new candidates be discussed openly at the departmental meetings and that the faculty immediately proceed to a vote. They still recognized that the faculty has the ultimate vote on hiring.

A further clause asked that the new candidates be discussed in groups to allow a more representative choice.

Several days earlier, faculty had suggested that the potential faculty members be discussed and voted on in a secret faculty meeting. Students felt this was in contradiction to the spirit of openness and trust the faculty was advocating.

After 90 minutes of vigorous debate the faculty decided to caucus to consolidate their opinion and discuss the admissibility of the student motion.

Meanwhile, the students decided on a compromise position.

When the faculty returned, chairman Clairmont said that the student motion was out of order. He refused to table the new student motion for further discussion and rejected a plea to delay the hiring procedure until an agreement could be negotiated.

On Thursday the faculty had their own secret meeting to work out a new hiring mechanism but did not consult the Students' Union.

The faculty invited interested students to their special meeting on Friday to discuss the two potential candidates Clark and Dick Metzoff from York University.

More than 20 students attended, but made clear that it was another compromise on their part. They regarded the hiring procedures as open to further negotiations.

Student after student spoke against the two candidates and questioned the urgency of making a decision im-

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Groups protest planning scheme

Halifax neighbourhood organizations and anti-pollution groups are organizing opposition to several contentious development plans slated for presentation by the Metro Area Planning Commission at a meeting this week. At a meeting Thursday (today) at 8:00 p.m. in the Oxford St. School, the Commission will unveil schemes aimed at intensive industrial development and high density living on the peninsula of Halifax within four years. The plans centre around container shipping and sewage disposal.

The initial planning, under the aegis of the Tory regime, was conducted in secret, and the meeting Thursday is the first open session for the Commission. Several community groups are expected to voice strong opposition to the plans. At a

meeting last week Halifax Mayor Allan O'Brien told the groups that at least one of the planners involved thinks industry should have top priority in Halifax, and the development proposals reflect this view.

Included are container piers at Mill Cove on the Halifax side of Bedford Basin, Navy Island on the Dartmouth side, more piers at the site of the new container terminal at Point Pleasant Park, and a container facility where the city dump now sits (raising the question of a new dump location). The plans also call for a sewage plant at Point Pleasant and two large research developments behind Purcell's Cove in which Dalhousie and the Bedford Institute of Oceanography are involved.

The most vocal opposition is coming from and through the Bedford Basin Pollution Committee. They see the proposed container facilities as a direct threat and the resulting increase in rail traffic around the basin as a further deterrent to use of the Basin for recreation.

The proposed sewage treatment plant would be located on a reef just off Point Pleasant (presumably to circumvent park regulations) and would provide less than secondary treatment, necessitating the use of barges to remove the sewage on a weekly basis. The opposition feels such a plant would ruin the park aesthetically and create an offensive odor in the area.

The Pollution Committee is one of many groups opposing the plans. Others include the North End Tenants Association, the Neighbourhood Centre, the Halifax Welfare Rights Committee and the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People.