

David Boyd on the Newfoundland Fishery, 1978-94

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David Boyd on the Newfoundland Fishery, 1978-94

[DAVID BOYD WAS BORN IN the small fishing community of Tizzard's Harbour on New World Island, Newfoundland. He was raised there during the 1950s and early '60s. Descended from a long line of fish killers, he says: "I feel a genetic inclination to the sea. I had my own punt at age seven and fished until I left to attend Memorial University in St. John's in the mid-'60s." He afterwards taught school for twenty-eight years, although "I don't like to be called a teacher because immediately people tend to pigeonhole and stereotype me as a certain kind of individual." He is also a photographer, writer, poet, scuba diver, and fisherman. He fishes with his wife, Christine, who is a full-time fisherperson.

In 1994 he wrote: "I abhor the heavy hand of government, making laws to keep the industrious, hard worker down, while catering to the special interests of a lobby group. And I don't feel that I and others like me should have to pay the price of the devastation wrought by foreigners in these, our native waters."

Boyd has written scores of personal letters, letters to the editor, and briefs to convey his ideas about the Newfoundland fishery. A selection from those documents follows, commencing with a speech inspired by an event in 1978. In that year Newfoundland Fisheries Minister Walter Carter issued a glossy pamphlet, distributed province wide, called *Fish is the Future*. The back cover was a photograph of a blond child, in a boat, watching a codtrap being hauled. Ed.]

David Boyd on the Newfoundland Fishery, 1978-94

1. Speech, 1978

"The course is set ... the future is ours at last." These are the optimistic words sprawled across the color photo of a golden haired boy, watching, fascinated, as a trap crew haul, in Mr. Carter's policy booklet entitled "Fish is the Future."

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Before I write any further about the fishery, let me state clearly that I am presently engaged in the teaching profession. Allow me to answer your [question] "What business do you have commenting or even being concerned about the fishery?" by saying first of all that we live in a democracy, at least I like to think so, where a person is not only allowed but duty bound to make such a vital part of our heritage his business. Secondly, as if further justification was needed, allow me to say that Newfoundland's greatest reformer in the fishery, Sir William Coaker, was certainly not a fisherman, nor is the present president of the fisherman's union [Richard Cashin]. Thirdly, in Mr. Carter's words, "The fishery will be everybody's business." Fourthly, I have my own as well as the interest of my son and my students to protect in seeing that our traditional Newfoundland freedom of the sea is not completely eradicated. Fifthly, I have a fierce sense of justice and I get as mad as Hell when I see a few people trying to fill their coffers at the expense of others.

Having, I hope, defended my right to speak on the future of our province, if "Fish is the Future" allow me to return to the beautiful but whimsical photo on the back of Mr. Carter's booklet. The implication of the photo being, of course, in the words of the booklet, [that] "Young men will choose the fishery as a career, instead of trying to get out of it."

If the situation wasn't so very, very serious that would be a laughable statement. Rather than laughing, however, the present situation in the fishery would make one with any salt in his blood, fighting mad.

Imagine for a minute that young Newfoundlander pictured on the back of Mr. Carter's booklet has suddenly grown up and, in Mr. Carter's words, wants "to choose the fishery as a career." Let's further imagine that one of the men in the trap boat is the boy's now retired father who would like his son to take his place in the fishery. Correct me if I'm wrong, but the only license that young man could possibly get is a general fishing license, the same as is presently held by many carpenters, government employees, mechanics, teachers, school board supervisors and a host of other people. I am not saying it is wrong for these latter groups to have the freedom to hold a general license, but certainly a man dedicated to making his living from the fishery should be able to get more. Unless he has been fishing full time for the past three consecutive years 1976, '77, & '78 he could not receive transfer of his father's lobster or salmon licenses. Even though his father is retiring from the fishery, he is unable to pass his lobster license down to his son who wishes to continue the centuries old family tradition of fishing. The reason being that some idiot in Ottawa thinks that allowing more people to lobster fish will deplete the resource. If all spawny and undersized lobsters are put back in the water, it makes no difference whether there are fifty or five hundred traps in a community. Allowing more to fish will not decimate the lobster population, but rather will share the profits and mean less for each fisherman. But what is more democratic — a lot for a few, or some for a lot?

The young man now has two choices. He can either take his chance of making a living on the general fishing license (if he is able to get his boat registered), or he can sadly watch the family fishing premises decay and fall into ruin. He can sell the lobster traps and salmon nets and try to live peacefully with the knowledge that the country built by his fisher forefathers has denied him the right to follow in their footsteps. If he decides to take a chance of making a living with a general fishing license and enter the cod trap fishery, for example, he has to throw himself at the mercy of the local cod trap committee. The

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committee composed of four or five members decide whether or not he will be allowed to draw for berths in the area. While the committee *may* allow people with lobster, salmon, purse seine, bar seine and general fishing licenses to draw, it is apparently in their power and even in their own interest to bar our imaginary young man from drawing for berths.

If that happens, and it has happened to more than one trap skipper and crew in the past, our "lucky, respected" young fisherman will have to put his trap in a scrap berth that was not considered good enough to put in the legal draw from which he was excluded.

While our young fisherman has to depend on a scrap berth, [and] on herring nets and squid, he daily sees his neighbours, his fellow Newfoundlanders, born and bred like himself, selling the catch from their hundreds of lobster traps; he sees the same men reaping the benefits of the salmon fishery and the lucrative herring and mackerel purse seine fishery.

Incredible, but these are the facts as they relate to the fishery in Newfoundland today. Mr. Carter's costly booklet gives us an unfortunate, rosy, deceiving and downright wrong impression of the fishery. The decay of community life, of neighbour helping neighbour, coupled with the vision of heretofore unheard of profits in the fishery, the attempt by many to make the big grab and the rampant covetousness and greed, is the true story of the Newfoundland fishery today. The danger to democracy is that a few fisherman are able to form legal committees and persuade governments to enact laws to protect their own selfish interest. Such are the regulations which I mentioned earlier which would prevent a person from taking over from his (her) father, much less entering the fishery as a new and extra entry. There are enough inequalities in the Newfoundland licensing system to start a small civil war. The fact that there has been no uprisings against the unjust and inequitable system of granting licenses speaks well for the non-militant nature of the Newfoundland fisherman. The most encompassing inequality as I see it is the fact that people are being barred from the fishery in any real way, while fisherman are not barred from other jobs. Wouldn't it be unfair and undemocratic to say to a young man who has spent a few years on a longliner — "You can't go to university; you can't go to trade school; you can't join the R.C.M.P. or you can't do carpenter work." Isn't it just as unfair to say to a man or woman, "you can't go fishing." After all, I haven't seen any birthmark on anyone yet which said they were privileged to have a lobster license or purse seine license.

Within the fishery the inequalities are maddening, frustrating and downright discriminatory. Many fisherman are privileged to have every license available and consequently have the opportunity, whether or not they do so, to make a good deal of money; while others have the opportunity to scrape only a bare living. In my opinion, the fundamental point that law makers must realize is that in a democracy the keystone of fair competition must be preserved at all cost. We must guard against giving certain sections of the fishery monopoly rights at the expense of the majority. In other words all bona fide fishermen and all those who choose to make the fishery their livelihood must be given a somewhat equal chance of success. If one is more successful than another, it should not be because he is more privileged, but because he is more skilled or works harder at his job. Tragically for the free Newfoundland that we knew as youngsters, this is no longer so. Outport Newfoundland today is not the Newfoundland which I was privileged to grow up in. The biggest reason being the restrictive licensing system. The more you try to prevent people from doing something, the greater the incentive to do it. Years ago when there were

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no licenses, not everyone wanted to go fishing, but those who did simply went to Labrador or fished in their own communities. No one starved and because of low prices no one made much money; but everyone felt that they had an equal chance and were not discriminated against. People relished the freedom which the sea had to offer. The fishery is indeed everybody's business, and for the sake of our forefathers, our fathers and more importantly our children, we must have the raw courage and guts to speak out and see that it is made equitable for everyone who wishes to pursue it as a means of livelihood. Will the future Newfoundland fishery be big business and big profits for a few, or a livelihood for many?

2. Brief, 1980

Durrell,
August 30/80

Royal Commission on Fisheries,
Government of Newfoundland¹ &
all Newfoundlanders who cherish our
Culture and Heritage

Since this letter will be an open appeal to Government and to people with convictions similar to mine, allow me to begin by addressing a few remarks to Mr. [Richard] Cashin, president of the Fishermen's Union. Mr. Cashin, in spite of the fact that Hitler blazed his will across Europe with total disregard for humanity, were I to have met him, I should have had to shake his hand — I should have had to give the Devil his due; and were I to meet you, Mr. Cashin, I would have to shake your hand, too. I would have to congratulate you, for where Hitler's awesome arsenal failed to bring us to our knees (albeit at a dear price did we fail to buckle), your trade union is steadily but surely robbing from us a culture and a heritage which we hold dear. It matters not to us whether a foreign power or a local trade union robs us of our traditional and cherished freedoms — the loss is just as real and even more repugnant when a right is seized by a certain segment of our own population. United behind our Government, we would gladly sacrifice our lives for the sake of ourselves and our families should a foreign power threaten our freedom, but when ten thousand or so people in our own province claim a virtual monopoly or exclusive right to the bounty of the sea and pressure Government to yield to their greedy and covetous demands through a powerful union, do we lie down and play dead? Do we yield our traditional right — do we surrender our heritage — do we forget? I say, Hell, No!

We all realize that bona fide fishermen must and should be granted certain privileges not bestowed on people working in other fields; we all realize the need for resource management, for quotas and conservation practices. We agree with that, but we realize that here in Newfoundland we have a birthright and a culture that is unique and which we must be eager and willing to maintain for ourselves and our children. For the sake of preserving our birthright and our unique freedom of an outport existence, we must not be brainwashed and befuddled by such immature and silly reasoning as — "I can't be a teacher, so you shouldn't be allowed to catch any fish." People who use such reasoning to persuade Government to enact laws to protect their own interest, fail to realize, or don't want to realize, that catching fish is a right granted by birth, and a right that has been

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fought for and protected in two world wars, while teaching or any other job is a privilege for which one has to have certain qualifications. There is a lot of difference [between] saying — “I can’t be a doctor because at the present time I do not possess the necessary skills, I am not qualified,” [and] saying — “I can’t be a fisherman because that right has been seized by a certain number of people to whom Governments, both Federal and Provincial, are sympathetic.” In other words, a fisherman could leave his position and become a teacher or doctor, providing of course, he was qualified, but a teacher or doctor could not, *would not be allowed*, to claim his birthright and become a fisherman. In Newfoundland, today, due to Federal regulations, we see young men who would like to get into the fishery being refused licenses and effectively barred from the water, while some fishermen have been granted practically every license imaginable. Words usually fall on ears that do not want to hear, and hands that do not want to act — but believe me, the inequalities within the fishery itself are sufficient to warrant a royal commission investigation.

To those who may not fully realize the extent to which our traditional freedoms have been sacrificed, allow me to give you a few facts. Only yesterday, my wife and I were denied the right to sell three hundred pounds of fresh fish (our Summer’s voyage, I might add), not because the facility was plugged, not because we would in any shape or form cause deprivation to any fisherman, but simply because we were not considered bona fide fisherman, and I personally was classified by that despicable term, moonlighter. (Would someone please explain how such a term can have meaning in a supposedly free enterprise system?) The tradition of having salted herring, mackerel, etc. for one’s personal consumption has been robbed, since we are not allowed to place a net even for such purposes. For some time now, of course we have been denied the right to catch lobster or salmon for personal use. At the present time no new person can obtain a fishing license, even though [Fisheries Minister Walter] Carter spent thousands a few years ago in his policy booklet to tell us that “fish is the future.” The situation then is this: the government is spending millions of our tax dollars to help the fishermen, who at the same time, through their union, are attempting to rob us — native Newfoundlanders — of every vestige of our birthright pertaining to the sea. If we in Newfoundland, especially in the outports, give up any more of the things which make life here unique and free, we might as well be living in downtown Calgary and change the tune “I’d rather be in Newfoundland” to “I’d rather be in Russia.”

The time has come to declare war on those who would steal from us the salt of our blood. We can start by letting Governments know that we will now stand up and be counted. If you agree with and support my arguments, please phone 884-2485 and ask to have your name placed on this letter which will be shortly sent to the Royal Commission studying the fishery and to the appropriate Federal departments. Asking for your support to the fight over the right to catch fish, I remain

Yours truly,

David Boyd.

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3. Letter, 1980

Durrell
Sept. 15/80

To Whom it May Concern:

A short while ago I published a letter to the Editor in practically all newspapers around Newfoundland in which I expressed a view pertaining to the management of our coastal waters and a request that Newfoundlanders with similar views call me and add their names to the letter. At this point in time approximately 200 people have called from all over the province, giving their wholehearted support to the view which I presented. No doubt there are those, especially people who have a comfortable niche in the licensing scene, who feel I have no business voicing opinions about the fishery. People who have called, however, feel very strongly about our loss of traditional rights and feel that it's about time we present an opposing view to people in authority.

I would therefore like to explain why I am embarked on this present course of attempting to rescue our God given freedoms from those who would have it all for themselves. I am upset and so should be most Newfoundlanders, including the bulk of the fishermen, about the course which the Federal and Provincial bureaucrats and the Fishermen's union are taking to further their own interests with a complete disregard for the fact that they are dealing with the public domain. I want to make governments and people realize, since they seem to have forgotten, that it is not only the fishermen who own the waters and its contents off our shores, but the people — every man, woman and child in Newfoundland. As I have preached in other letters, we fought and paid at a great price in human life to hold on to our freedoms and certainly the freedom of the sea is one which most Newfoundlanders cherish.

Now it appears, a small segment of our population is claiming a virtual monopoly and exclusive right to the bounty of the sea. In my opinion, the philosophy seems to be — let no more people into this exclusive group and eventually freeze out some of the smaller operators. Many of the same crowd who are preaching "too many fishermen" were themselves glad enough to be able to obtain licenses a few short years ago. People who make such statements, themselves usually the more fortunate ones in the fishery, should ask themselves what right entitles them to more than their neighbour. Many fishermen misunderstand my views. They curse me behind my back — they feel I am attempting to take something from them. Nothing could be further from the truth. I am for equality in the fishery — I am for every fisherman having an equal chance at this resource. I am against this wealth being handed over to a small and exclusive group of fishermen at the expense of the majority and at the expense of our youth and our traditional rights. It has gotten to the point now where I hesitate to take my son too often on the sea for fear that he will fall in love with something that, if the present trend continues, he will have no hope of sharing in the future, should he so desire, of course. It's about time that all thinking and sensible Newfoundlanders get off their pathetic asses, and voice their opinions about their resource. All too often we hear of civil unrest, or uprisings and riots in other countries. I fear that unless common sense prevails, unless the wealth of the sea is equitably distributed instead of being placed in the pockets of a minority, we will not have to look far for similar unrest and uprising.

The fishermen's union, the fish trades association and some of the fishermen, each

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for their own vested interest, would have us believe that the few fish caught by the so called "moonlighters" and the number of people in the fishery, are the real ills of the industry. The biggest ill as I see it, is the injustice of the licensing system. If a seiner, for example, which has done well on herring and caplin and has a quota in the fall, is permitted to place gill nets, cod traps, etc., why is the fisherman who is depending on gill nets or cod trap alone, not allowed to seine herring if he so desires? Why is one person or crew permitted to license two longliners and have restricted licenses, while a young Newfoundlander has to sit on the bank and watch them, in some cases, make a virtual fortune? Why is not the tremendous crab wealth more equally distributed? If a man who has made a hundred thousand in a few months at crab is allowed his turn among the inshore fishermen at a squid boat, why are not the other fishermen entitled to a share of the crab off our shores? The present course is oriented towards a lot for a few instead of a living for a lot — and then government has the gall to tear from a young Newfoundlander his rights or to say to you and me that we are allowed to catch only a few fish to eat.

I cannot overemphasize the fact that governments and union seem to have lost sight of the fact that they are dealing with the domain of the public. They are attempting to wrest for themselves a public commodity with no interest in reaching an agreement suitable to all concerned. Many of us have already been brainwashed to the extent that we feel guilty about taking a few fish from the sea — we must never forget that it's our fish too, although we should use common sense in restricting our fishing effort.

When governments make laws to restrict free enterprise and competition they are setting a dangerous precedent. If my government is going to prevent me from selling a fish because I am already earning X number of dollars, or my family income is such an amount, why not then look at the family income of fishermen? Why not look at the amount accruing from family business or from spouse's income? If a man who is working for nine or ten months of the year and making ten, fifteen or twenty thousand dollars is excluded from selling any fish, why should a man whose family income is an equal amount or more be treated any differently? I know what I am saying smacks of totalitarianism and is ridiculous; it is no more ridiculous than the laws which are scheduled to go into effect soon.

It was the apathy of the thinking man which contributed to Hitler's rise to power in Germany, and, as I said, unless we heed former fishery minister Carter's words — "the fishery is everyone's business" — and let governments know our concerns for our traditional rights and for a fair distribution of licenses as they relate to the potential of the sea, we will be sowing a society ripe for unrest and dissatisfaction.

My view is that any Newfoundlander who wishes to be a fisherman full-time should be able to claim his birthright and should be granted a single license declaring him a fisherman. We would then have an equal right to all species, instead of certain lucrative species being divided among a fortunate few. That is not to say, that everyone will suddenly want to be a fisherman — the industry should regulate itself as do other areas of human endeavour. Certainly everyone does not build a shop, a garage or a chicken bar. But if a person does raise his own money and invest in such an enterprise, he has no guarantee that he will not face competition from others who wish to start a similar business. Some of the fishermen [who] wish to obtain bounties etc. from our tax dollars... want and have obtained a monopoly at the expense of our traditional freedoms.

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My view, for people working in other fields, is that they not be permitted to set fixed gear (unless they wish to enter the fishery full time) but [that] they still be allowed to use hand lines, etc. and would be permitted to sell their catch providing the facilities could accommodate them. Let's face it, the more laws there are keeping people out of the fishery, the greater will be their desire to get in. Just as most people don't bother to start a restaurant, even though they know it's their right, most people wouldn't bother to go fishing if they knew they could claim their birthright at any time.

Again, if you haven't already supported my views, you may have your name on my list by phoning 884-2485. There may be areas in the province where only one or two species such as lobster and herring are available in quantity, [where] my above suggestion re licensing would have to be adjusted to the circumstances.

Yours truly,

David Boyd

4. Letter, 1990

P.O. Box 133
Durrell, NF
April 2, 1990

Mr. Bernard Valcourt
Minister of Fisheries
Ottawa

Dear Mr. Valcourt:

I realize that you are a busy man, but I beg you [to] address my concern, not with an anonymous letter from your secretary, but with a personal reply.

Many people in Newfoundland are very distressed over Mr. Walter Carter's handling of the fishery crisis in Newfoundland.

It is incredible to say the least, that while foreigners continue to rape our stocks, that while wholesale dumping of small and unwanted species is being practiced by Canadian draggers, that while seal herds grow in geometric proportion, that while deep sea and inshore plants shut their doors, that Mr. Carter, Newfoundland's minister of Fisheries, continues to harp on the part-timers — the born and bred Newfoundlander out in the boat with a jigger, as being the number one [problem] of the fishery.

It is no wonder that a full time fisherman from the Northern Peninsula recently called for Mr. Carter's resignation on that very basis.

Instead of utilizing his energy attacking part-timers who take less than one-half of 1 percent of the total allowable catch and who many full-time fishermen depend on as helpers, Mr. Carter should be tackling the real problems and the real issues, such as draggers with decks ankle deep in spawn, trawling 24 hours a day on the spawning grounds.

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Mr. Valcourt, I urge you to protect the rights of all Newfoundlanders as guaranteed under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and not to be seduced by the rhetoric of Mr. Carter who is no friend to democracy. Mr. Carter's socialist philosophy of tight state control over the fishery — [by] a small number of "professionals" as he likes to say — will mean the end of rural Newfoundland and the freedoms we hold so dear.

We need a fisheries minister who has the intestinal fortitude to fight the foreigners — to stop the big companies dumping fish not on their customer's order from that trip — to curb dragging on the spawning grounds and to cull the seals, so that the fish will be out there to come in to hundreds of Newfoundland communities as it did years ago.

Cutting out the part-timers will be akin to robbing a person of his good name — it will diminish the quality of life and freedom of the person victimized, but will do nothing for the thief — in this case the minister of fisheries and the state of the commercial fishery.

Yours truly,

David Boyd

5. Letter to the editor, 1991²

Congratulations, Mr. [John] Crosbie

Dear Mr. Crosbie:

Firstly, please accept my congratulations on your most recent appointment as [federal] Minister of Fisheries. You are undoubtedly in a position of utmost importance with regard to Atlantic Canada in general and Newfoundland in particular.

Over the next days and months you will be lobbied and pressured by fishermen's committees, the provincial minister of fisheries and Union representatives to enact legislation directed against part-time fishermen in this province.

During the past 10 years, I have become perhaps the most vocal in the province in expressing concern about the conflicting paths of fishery licensing policy and the jealously guarded and traditional rights and freedoms of outport people in this province.

As a result of my endeavours in championing the cause of historic access to a "common domain" property, I have become a thorn in the side of those narrow and short sighted individuals who demand socialistic protection for what they claim to be "their" resource; while at the same time attracting much support and encouragement from those who are appalled at present restrictive licensing policy and even more frightened at the spectre of future repressive legislation against cherished and God-given rights enjoyed for 500 years by our outport people.

For 450 years the hardy outport people of Newfoundland wrestled a living from the sea — in peace, with freedom and in harmony with each other. In the last half of this

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century, foreigners discovered the great wealth of fish off our shores, and unchecked, they plundered and raped that resource. Now 40 years later, we and our children are being denied our historic rights — and not only that — the part-timer is being portrayed as the villain in the overall fishery picture. Why does the born and bred Newfoundlander, whose only crime has been to be inventive, productive and energetic, have to lose century old privileges, when his damage to the overall fishery picture is equivalent only to a single Russian factory freezer? That is the question.

We are all for the full-time fisherperson being given every advantage in the quest to make a living. There comes a point, however, at which unreasonable demands are being made on the general population. Demands which greatly restrict a person's sense of personal freedom without really producing a significant gain to the professional fisherman. Right now there is an unprecedented lobby ongoing by fishermen's committees and the Fisherman's Union, led by Richard Cashin, to do with the stroke of a pen that which Hitler couldn't do with his formidable army. At the risk of sounding melodramatic, Mr. Crosbie, I must mention that at the front of every church in every little Newfoundland community, a plaque — an Honour Roll — is fastened to each wall. On each plaque is written the names of those from that community who sacrificed their youth and their lives for the freedoms that they knew and enjoyed. I don't have to spell out the freedoms which they valued more than life itself. Suffice it to say that where Hitler failed, the Fisherman's Union is succeeding. As proof of that statement, allow me to briefly allude to the Federal Minister's³ response to the Recommendations of the Task Force on Northern Cod.⁴ In regard to licensing fishermen, it states, "A review will be carried out in conjunction with fishermen and their representatives so that a licensing regime that improves the situation of full-time, professional participants can be developed in 1992 and beyond."

That is paramount to the government saying to a Woolworths, "What can we do to improve your business situation in St. John's?" As obvious self-interest response would be, "Well you start by deleting the licenses of all the other stores." Good for the group involved, but hardly consistent with the principles of a democratic, free-enterprise system of government.

I would therefore ask, Mr. Crosbie, that since the vast majority of lobbying for legislation will come from groups outlined, I would ask you to bear in mind that the slanted view you get is not necessarily that of the majority of the electorate.

For fairness, Justice and Freedom, I remain,

Yours truly,

David Boyd

6. Letter, 1992

P.O. Box 133
Durrell, Nfld.
A0G 1Y0
July 7, 1992

Licensing Officials
Department of Fisheries & Oceans
Newfoundland Region

Dear Sirs:

It is said that every cloud has a silver lining and that it's an ill wind that blows no good. Such is the case of this latest "crisis" in the fishery, I will reproduce here one paragraph from a letter I wrote on April 8, 1992 and you will see what I mean.

"It is obvious to anyone with an interest in these matters, that the goal of the FFAW [Fish, Food and Allied Workers union] is to eventually arrive at a small core of "master fishermen" who will be granted by the government of the day a monopoly on fish, seals, etc. and the remainder of the population will be subservient to and dependent on this master race of "professionals." Other members of the public will be viewed with mistrust except when they are called upon to furnish tax dollars for subsidies for herring, seals, etc. This master race will determine exactly who are new entrants into the fishery. In addition members of this small group of professionals will be allowed to work ashore in bad years. This part of the plan is already in place and has been sanctioned by the 'weak-kneed' politicians that Mr. Boland⁵ speaks about. Isn't it interesting that politicians are only 'weak-kneed' when they refuse to adopt the official union line!"

The purpose of this letter is to alert the public to view the FFAW for what they are — a union, nothing less, nothing more. The role is represent a group of individuals — many of whom wish to have exclusive right to the bounty of the sea. Now that the bounty has been diminished, the FFAW is trying to use diminished stocks as an excuse to add further restrictions to licensing, entry etc."

I have always argued that the "part-time" issue should have been a non-issue. It has only served to deflect attention from the real problems facing the fishing industry. There is no doubt in my mind now that the union will be renewing its call for the abolition of part-timers, especially those with other sources of income. I just ask that before you adopt policies which discriminate on the basis of income (family or individual) that you consider the implications of your policies. In any event, don't completely destroy the face of rural Newfoundland by going so far as outlawing helpers in the fishery. By helpers, I mean individuals who the full time license holder designates as his helper in the lobster boat, trap boat, etc. Maybe that is an idea — a helper's license instead of a part time license. Such a license would bestow upon the holder no privileges, except to give him or her the right to help the father, brother or friend who is the full time, bona fide fisherman. I am attempting to balance the right of every citizen to a "common domain" property, while recognizing the superior rights granted to those who have opted to pursue fish for a livelihood. Maybe we can all receive some degree of satisfaction. I think you know what

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I am trying to say and I appreciate your time to consider my input.

Yours sincerely,

David Boyd

7. Letter, 1993

P.O. Box 133, Durrell,
Newfoundland, A0G 1Y0
Feb. 3, 1993

Dear Editor:

Please allow me space in your paper for the most important concern. I wish to relate to all those individuals in Newfoundland's scattered outports, that, as of January 1st, 1994 their part time fishing licenses and vessel registrations will be history. That is the latest dictate to me from DFO [the Department of Fisheries and Oceans] and I use dictate advisedly — as in dictatorship, dictatorial, as it seems that is the type of society that we now live in. I say to fellow Newfoundlanders who love liberty, that isn't it terrible when regulations and policies of a Minister and Department of the Crown affecting generations of Newfoundlanders are really policies and rules of the FFAW — a self-interest group whose policies are based on greed and gain for its own members and who do not have the slightest interest [in], nor care about, the guiding principles of a democracy.

Any time that the Minister considers a sensible, humanitarian approach like grandfathering personal fishing licenses and vessel registration to those individuals who have had a long and historic attachment to the fishery, Richard Cashin has only to rant and roar and the minister and his senior officials are gone off with their tails between their legs, tripping over each other to take away another cherished freedom, rather than endure the wrath of the FFAW and Mr. Cashin, in particular. This then is an appeal to our DFO officials and to our Ministers of Fisheries, to remind them that the people of Newfoundland put them into power in the last election to make policies which reflect the wishes of the whole population, and to ask them to consider Grandfathering those who have had licenses for many years. I hope to relate to you the anguish and heartache that a fifty year old person will feel if government forces him to stand on the shore and gaze out over water that has been his first love for years, but which for him will never again be free! And for what gain will government take away this freedom and inflict this heart searing agony that only those of us who grew up in our time and small outports can relate to? The answer is simple — for no gain whatsoever. The part-timer doesn't want a lobster, crab, mackerel, herring or any such restricted licenses. He doesn't want a guaranteed income, low interest loans, subsidies and grants. He is not taking anything from the public purse — he merely wants the few freedoms that [have] made living in his Newfoundland outport satisfying to him. If his contribution over the years in terms of catch has not being overly significant, neither has the harm he has caused. The charge against him is a trumped up one, by the FFAW, based solely on jealousy and greed and has no moral or scientific basis.

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This is why it is particularly dangerous to the rest of us for our elected officials and our policy makers to be afraid of a union — any union — which would like its members only to have everything at the expense of the rest of society.

I am asking everyone in Newfoundland who reads this letter, to please get up now and get your scissors and cut out this letter and write across it — I agree with David Boyd and send it to HON. JOHN CROSBIE, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, OTTAWA, Canada K1A 0A6. Of course, many will not agree with me, but if you do, no matter what your occupation, if you do not stand up for Democracy today, your turn to lose a cherished right may come tomorrow. Thank you and remember there is no stamp needed on your envelope.

Yours Sincerely,

David Boyd
Twillingate

8. Letter, 1993

P.O. Box 133, Durrell,
Newfoundland, A0G 1Y0
March 16, 1993

Hon. Brian Tobin,
Minister of Fisheries,
Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Mr. Tobin:

This is a letter with a very specific request to which I would really appreciate a very specific reply at your earliest possible date. I realize, of course, that you are a very busy man.

As I stated in an earlier fax, I am contemplating forming a province wide association or Alliance of Newfoundlanders for Freedom (ANFF), to help protect and preserve our traditional rights and freedoms and unique cultural lifestyle. We see no reasons, for example, with a seal population eating its way out of house and home, that we should be suddenly denied the centuries old right to kill a seal. That is an intrinsic part of outport culture and we will not stand to lose that right. In other words, we are not prepared to have special interest groups take from us the freedoms which we hold so dear. To bring the matter home, how would the honourable members on Parliament Hill feel if their rights to pursue their cultural heritage [were] suddenly abolished?

Secondly, long time part-time license holders, considering their financial, emotional and spiritual attachment to the water, should be offered some option, rather than being just unilaterally dictated to by their government.

People like myself are not costing the government a cent in compensation, loans, gear up programs, etc.

To get to the specific point of this letter then:

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How far are you prepared to go in recognizing the rights of part time fisherman like myself? Are you prepared to:

(a) Maintain the status quo?

(b) Allow a person like myself with 30 years sealing experience to be "grandfathered" re. sealing license and secondly to allow some kind [of] "helper's permit" which will satisfy the mind by allowing me to go on the water with a seasoned skipper without facing litigation?

(c) Are you prepared to give people like me the option of becoming "new entrants" under a sponsoring skipper?

(d) Or, in spite of our years on the water, are you going to tell us that we are history?

We know option "d" is the one some of your advisors are adamant about, but under our supposedly democratic system of government, is that the legal or moral thing to do? Your answer to me here will determine how far I will personally go in laying the infrastructure of a province wide, grass roots movement, that will become not only an alliance for our cultural identity, but a potent political force as well, in support of candidates who are prepared to shape Rural Newfoundland, not according to the vision of a Water Street Merchant's Son [i.e., Richard Cashin], but in line with the wishes and aspirations of the people who have lived and worked in their communities all their lives.

Looking forward to hearing from you, I remain.

Yours truly,

David Boyd

cc. Mr. [George] Baker,⁶ Premier [Clyde] Wells, Mr. [Walter] Carter

9. Poem, [1993?]

Ayatollah Clyde

You may speak of statesmen big and small,
Of heroes far and wide,
None can compare, not even close
To Ayatollah Clyde.

We should thank our lucky stars,
Get down on bended knee,
That we have such a man as Clyde
To guide our destiny.

For we now have to think no more,
Nor rack our brain each night.
Just put our trust in Premier Clyde
For he will do what's right.

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I know the past grows dim too soon,
But try to clear the haze.
Think back to just two years ago,
To pre-election days.

For when He spoke, His voice like silk,
It touched you to the heart.
"Yes, yes," a voice inside you cried,
"My future's yours to chart!"

Oh, how He made the future bright,
Like the sunshine after rain.
We knew from promises to come,
We had everything to gain.

On education He did speak,
Of wrongs that he would right.
How computer rooms in Harbour Deep⁷
Would equal those in Cowan Heights.⁸

"It's even further I will go,
To overcome adversity.
For out in Central Newfoundland, I'll put
A brand new university!"

To our seniors, past their prime
Their contribution made.
"It's not cucumbers⁹ that you need,
But more hospital beds!"

To our children, far and wide
In the crowded city street,
Heed our come home call, we beg
To make THE PLAN complete.¹⁰

So now this jewel in the sea,
This island we love dear
Can chart her course to future bright
Cause we have Clyde to steer.

Wait! There's a conflict in my head,
A voice tells me to wake.
To stop this foolish fantasy,
Slow down — put on the brake!

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What! Be a traitor to His plan?
And pen Satanic verse.
Expose the truth, let out the cat
Endure eternal curse.

To say He's on an EGO trip,
We're drifting out to sea.
That the rudder's gone — the rations low
You'll hear it not from me!

—David Boyd

10. Letter, 1993

P.O. Box 133
Durrell, Nfld.
A0G 1Y0
Dec. 10, 1993

TO FELLOW OUTPORT NEWFOUNDLANDERS:

This is basically a transcript of a reply to Richard Cashin's personal attack on me on the Fisherman's Broadcast Dec. 15, 1993.

To Fisherman's Broadcast:

Two days ago I sent you a letter giving you my opinion as to the future of Rural Newfoundland if the federal government implemented Mr. Cashin's report. I stated that this, in effect, would be taking the resources of the ocean and handing them over to members of the FFAW, thus denying 98% of Newfoundlanders traditional rights to the sea. With Mr. Cashin now in Ottawa¹¹, it is a virtual certainty that a member of the St. John's elite will be telling outport Newfoundlanders what they are, and are not allowed to do.

In an age when the Aboriginal Peoples, the Inuit and Indians are demanding that their rights, their culture and their traditions be respected, I think you will agree that this certainly deserves debate.

Instead of speaking to these issues, Mr. Cashin chooses to deflect the real issues with a personal attack on me, with misinformation and half truths supplied by some "professional" fisherman. The fact of the matter is (not that I feel I need to make any apology to Mr. Cashin or anyone else for my achievements) that I do not operate, nor own, a fiberglass longliner, my "electronic business" consists of selling the very occasional VHF radio or Loran C from my home, [and] as far as being a landlord, I just completed, personally, with the sweat of my brow a building housing four apartments which will take years to pay off.

Let me say to Mr. Cashin that I earned by stripes as a Newfoundlander in the blood and gurry of a splitting table, half asleep in the light of an old oil lamp, in a tiny isolated outport, when he (Mr. Cashin) was tucked in his comfortable bed in St. John's.

Because I question the constitutionality of our government saying O.K. — you, you

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and you can have access to the seals, fish, etc. for the next 25 years and you, you and you touch one and you're a criminal, I am being branded by Mr. Cashin and others as a troublemaker. After all we're talking about our birthright — something that scores of Newfoundlanders died to defend.

Mr. Cashin is intent on taking away my rights that I have enjoyed for over thirty years, but for years he saw nothing wrong with the rich shareholders of big fish companies, in Toronto, Montreal and elsewhere, pocketing their dividends, while their steel-hulled draggers scooped up every fish on the winter spawning grounds. The captains of foreign vessels must continue to laugh at our stupidity, as they listen to Mr. Cashin berating the part-timer, the guy with a jigger, as they load their huge vessels off our shores. Now we've reached a point where born and bred outport Newfoundlanders are being denied the right to shoot a seal to feed his family, or put out a net to get a few herring or mackerel, or soon, perhaps, even step foot in a boat to help the family enterprise.

This is to me very, very sad. When Cubans, Koreans, and other foreign nationals have more rights around our shores than born and bred Newfoundlanders it is time for a revolution. A revolution against policies precipitated by greed, covetousness and fear against one's neighbor.

I want full time, professional fisherpersons to have primary access to the resources of the sea. I am all for that. What I am against is our government overreacting to demands of the FFAW and taking away our traditional freedoms which will make our lives poor, indeed, without benefiting anyone in any real way.

If you are concerned, as I am, clip this letter and mail to Hon. Brian Tobin, Minister of Fisheries, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. You don't need a stamp on an envelope addressed to the Minister.

Thank-you,

David Boyd

11. Letter, 1994

P.O. Box 133, Durrell,
Newfoundland, A0G 1Y0
March 14, 1994

Dear Editor:

As on CBC's Cross Country Check-up last night, there has been considerable discussion recently about the Newfoundland fishery. It seems to be in vogue currently to place all the blame on the Federal Government. An incredible fact that no one seems to be aware of, and one that I wish to make known, is that two of the biggest culprits in this whole mess [are] the Provincial Dept. of Fisheries and the Fishermen's Union. These two bodies, in my opinion, have committed the most treasonous and vile acts, both of omission and commission, ever perpetrated against the Newfoundland people. Their crime of commission, and this is particularly true of the Union under Mr. Cashin, is the

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unbelievable, persistent energy, time and money spent lobbying both levels of government to stop any fishing activity by any Newfoundlander not deemed as a bona fide fisherman. This, of course, is in direct conflict with traditional Newfoundland outport culture.

Their crime of omission has been their failure over the years to acknowledge and aggressively deal with the real cause of the current ecological disaster — that is the unbelievable quantity and quality of technology employed against the great virgin spawning biomass both by foreign and domestic trawlers. While Mr. Cashin and others lay in bed at night wondering how to get rid of the Newfoundland “part-timer”, hundreds of draggers, decks knee deep in spawn, plied their deadly harvest — 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

For the past twenty years I have been a lone voice, begging both levels of government to ignore the lobby by the Fishermen’s Union against the “moonlighters” and concentrate on protecting the biomass so that the fish could continue to come ashore and our unique lifestyle could continue. Unfortunately I was ignored, and even condemned by Mr. Cashin, in his own words, as a, quote, “nut!”

It is so pathetically ironic, that as a fighter for the inshore fishery, I should be villainized by Mr. Cashin and ignored by government, while Mr. Cashin, who by neglecting to lead a united lobby against the offshore, actually participated in today’s crisis, should, along with other union members, be sought out and hired by Mr. Tobin, the Federal Minister, as advisors. There is no one as blind as he who will not see!

The current partnership in Ottawa, in my opinion, and I am sure I will be ignored as in the past, will spell the end for rural Newfoundland. The freedoms which we cherish so dearly and which have been a part of our culture for centuries, such as the right to shoot a seal or jig a fish for food — the right to jump in the fishing boat — will become the exclusive domain of the “professional” fisherman. No outport Newfoundlander should be denied his rights and freedoms because the Union and both levels of government allowed draggers to decimate the cod stocks! That is the critical point.

We must be willing to fight to maintain our freedom, I am contemplating creating an Alliance of Newfoundlanders For Freedom (ANFF) to let government know that they are the servants of ALL Newfoundlanders, not just the Fisherman’s Union. We must stand united and show government that we will NOT give up our freedoms that we cherish more than life itself, just to please Mr. Cashin or to comply with the mistaken notion that for a fisherman to make a living all other outport people have to lose their rights. I want to hear from you — how far are you prepared to go in defense of your freedom?

Yours for Freedom,

David Boyd

12. Comment, 1994

A few days ago a fishery officer from Grand Falls was giving me his opinion as to how the fishery should be run.

“You mean,” I said, “I shouldn’t even be allowed to jig a cod or shoot a seal to feed my family.”

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"That's not your line of work," was his reply.

"You mean I have to give up my freedoms," I asked.

"What do you mean by freedom?" he retorted. "Do you mean the right to be involved in a commercial industry?"

"You don't understand the outport culture," I replied, which brings me to the point of why anyone would choose to live in an isolated, desolate cove along the cold, dreary windswept coast of Newfoundland. It is not the climate certainly — not the availability of well paying jobs, not the giddy excitement of the night life. Rather it is some inexplicable pull on our mind and soul that keeps us in our God-forsaken hamlets. It is that tug at the heart strings that in the 60's caused more than one Newfoundlander to take his own life in the community he loved, rather than be forced into resettling by outside people, who knew not, nor cared not about his intangible attachment to his outport home.

The freedom that I speak of, Mr. Fishery Officer, is the inalienable and (for 500 years unquestioned) right of every outport person, regardless of their station in life, to have their caplin, cod, herring, mackerel or seal, without feeling subservient to the few in the community that the government has deemed bona fide fishermen.

The point must be made over and over again, that these are traditional, taken-for-granted rights that outport Newfoundlanders have practiced since the earliest days of settlement and as such they should not be treated lightly. You tried to compare fishing with a job in the woods or with a teaching job. There can be no comparison, in my opinion, because fishing is more than a job — it is a way of life. In the latter two you are dependent upon someone hiring you and paying for services rendered. The fisherman is not hired — nor can he be fired. [He] is self employed and is taking only from the Public Domain. His effort and his hours are his own.

Having commented on our traditional rights and freedoms, I realize, however, that we are living in a changing world and I recognize the need for quotas and for conservation. However, in their zeal to create a small number of "master fishermen" I am afraid that those who the general public have elected will sacrifice unnecessarily the age old freedoms of the many for the benefit of the few. I realize I have been harping on this issue for a long time, and perhaps I will, like John Boland of the FFAW said in a recent letter to the editor [of the *Lewisporte Pilot*] — "soon get a fine education about what rights I have regardless of how many died in foreign lands" — but regardless of how you feel about the messenger, I hope the message deserves consideration.

Dave Boyd, Durrell, NF

Notes

¹This was the Royal Commission to Inquire into the Inshore Fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador, chaired by Bruce Paddock. It was appointed on August 20, 1980.

²Published in the *Newfoundland Herald*, May 11, 1991.

³Hon. Tom Siddon, Crosbie's predecessor in the federal fisheries portfolio.

⁴*Independent Review of the State of the Northern Cod Stock* (Ottawa: Department of Fisheries and Oceans, 1990). This was the report of a federal task force chaired by Leslie Harris.

⁵John Boland, an employee of the Fish, Food and Allied Workers union.

⁶The Member of Parliament for Gander-Twillingate.

⁷A small community in White Bay.

⁸Cowan Heights is a district in St. John's.

⁹An allusion to the Sprung Greenhouse, built in Mount Pearl with public money during the final years of Brian Peckford's premiership. It produced cucumbers through hydroponics. It went bankrupt.

¹⁰In the political campaign of 1989, Clyde Wells made much of the fact that Newfoundlanders had to leave home to find work. The "Plan" is the Wells' administration's document *Challenge & Change: A Strategic Economic Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador*, published in June, 1992.

¹¹Cashin had been appointed by Crosbie to the National Transportation Agency.