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The Persuasiveness of Smallwood: Rhetoric of *Cuffer* and *Scoff,* of Metonym and Metaphor

ROBERT PAINE

> . . . my speeches were admittedly emotional, intended to appeal to the people's emotions. I cannot deny it—I haven't any desire to deny it. But in fairness to myself, I must add that these words did constitute a relatively small part of my speech in each harbour or cove, the peroration; the rest of the speech dealt very factually with the issue before the people in that fateful referendum. The speeches ran from fifteen minutes to half an hour, and in a few cases, over half an hour. The larger the town, the longer the speech, of course.
>
> J. R. Smallwood, *I Chose Canada* (304)

THE FOCUS OF THIS ESSAY is the legitimation among Newfoundlanders of the rhetoric of J. R. Smallwood ("Joey" to the general public but "Joe" to his intimates), premier of the province between 1949 and 1972, especially in the campaign for Confederation with Canada, between 1946 and 1948. No one who heard Smallwood campaigning forgot him. His friend and powerful ally in Ottawa, John Pickersgill, one-time personal secretary to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, clerk of the Privy Council under Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent, cabinet minister under Prime Minister Lester Pearson, and the acknowledged *éminence grise* of Canadian politics for two decades, says Smallwood was "the most dynamic human being I had ever met. . . with unparalleled powers of persuasion" (CBC radio, Dec. 5, 1975). And yet, such testimony is not much help to us as we cannot take refuge in any "big-man" theory of historical explanation in studying the rhetoric of "big men." Cer-

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tainly one may safely say of Smallwood (as was said of Winston Churchill) that "he formulated . . . the mood of his countrymen and . . . mobilized it by making it a public possession, a social fact, rather than a set of disconnected, unrealized private emotions" (Geertz 72). But if we are to understand this and to appreciate the political power that Smallwood harnessed in this way, his rhetoric must be related to cognitive aspects of Newfoundland society at that time.[1]

In short, we are led to approach politics as a cultural phenomenon—one of popular culture at that—and as an activity directed to the brokerage of meaning.

NARRATIVE—CAMPAIGN VERNACULAR, 1946-48

Background

With the end of World War II, Clement Attlee's government was quick to announce that Newfoundlanders were to be given the chance to decide their own constitutional future. It was clear that the post-war British government wished to be released from her responsibility for her colony, and that it looked to Canada in this regard. The first step was the election of delegates, in 1946, to a national convention in St. John's, and the final step was a referendum in 1948, at which the options presented to the people of Newfoundland were: (1) continued government from Whitehall; (2) return to Responsible Government; or (3) becoming a province of Canada—that is, Confederation.

The effective leader of the Confederate cause was Joseph Roberts Smallwood. Born in 1900 at Gambo, he was educated in St. John's (attending as a day-boy one of the middle-class colleges), where he also took his first job as a newspaper reporter. In 1920 he went to New York, via temporary journalistic jobs in Halifax and Boston, where he stayed for five years working for *Call,* "the city's only English-language socialist daily" (Gwyn 25), and later for the *New Leader.* From 1925 he worked in Newfoundland, except for a six-month free-lance stint in London in 1927 where, as in New York, he sought the company of socialist journalists, labour leaders and politicians, and spent long hours in public libraries. Back in Newfoundland, he wrote several books, including a eulogistic biography of a Newfoundland populist leader; he conceived, edited and contributed to a Newfoundland encyclopaedia; he edited a short-lived newspaper and contributed a column to another; he worked briefly with the railwaymen's union and the fishing co-operative and he was an "expendable wardheeler" for an earlier Liberal leader (Gwyn 42). In the election of 1932 he was among the defeated candidates in the Liberal debacle. Between 1937 and 1943 he ran a radio programme.

Smallwood, then, was always busy with a number of different enterprises. But he had not found a career, and for this reason he was judged, in the circles where it mattered, as a man who had failed in the-placing-of-his-demand to be taken seriously. Later, he was to be as well-known to Canadians as John

Diefenbaker, but at the time of Attlee's announcement, he was raising hogs on the offal of the RCAF base at Gander! Forty-five years old, he looked a maverick, a has-been. His biographer Gwyn comments: "His failure (1925-1945) is a mystery only in the light of his later success" (35).

When Smallwood threw himself into the leadership of the Confederate cause—the least likely option of three—his most important asset regarding the campaign that lay ahead was his years as a broadcaster; and when the decision was taken by Whitehall *to broadcast the debates* of the National Convention across the island, Smallwood (by now one of the forty-five elected delegates) was handed a weapon that he could use incomparably better than any other of the Convention delegates. Suddenly, the fight no longer seemed, or rather sounded, so uneven.

In his radio show in the 1930s he billed himself as "The Barrelman"—that trusted member of a sealer's crew (sometimes the skipper himself) who is posted high on the mast to see the farthest. The programme retold the epic exploits of Newfoundlanders at a time when personal as well as national fortunes were at a low ebb. As the radio host, Smallwood was inundated with stories submitted by his listeners which he "gave back" on the air. As he justifiably recognizes in his autobiography, "my voice and personality became part of Newfoundland's very culture" (*I Chose Canada* 212). This coalescence of personality and culture, of man and the people, is—especially through the medium of radio—the essence of Smallwoodism. He became more than just a "voice" of the people; the people of the hundreds of harbours and coves and the urban wage-lines came to believe that they had found their identity in Smallwood. He was a kind of benevolent Procrustes: the people would "stretch" themselves on his bed of words.

This process developed significantly at the National Convention, which met weekday afternoons between September 1946 and January 1948. Dominating the debates, Smallwood seized the chance to turn the island into one enormous auditorium for himself. "Every living soul . . . listened," recalls Smallwood in his autobiography, with his customary hyperbole, "unless he was dying . . . There never was anything like it anywhere" (*I Chose Canada* 573). Whereas the Barrelman programme had been devoted to the "glorification of Newfoundland and everything good within it," Smallwood (as an elected Convention delegate) now concentrated upon "brutally realistic descriptions of life in the old Newfoundland" (*I Chose Canada* 205; Gwyn 53). But he also spoke of a possible future for this island people; the Barrelman, now with his gaze fixed on another horizon, could see farther than most. Now he could reach them all.

Cuffers and Scoffs

A complaint of Smallwood's critics at the time reveals their impotency, his mastery: "not a word [of what Smallwood says] is untrue, but the general impression is completely false." This statement was actually made in the House of Assembly by the Leader of the Opposition during Smallwood's first ad-

ministration. Smallwood's opponents at the National Convention did charge him with lying and, as a matter of fact, one could reverse the verdict on Smallwood's speeches that is quoted here. But either way the point remains that his opponents were quite bewildered about the way to deal with him as a popular orator. (He always had a well-prepared brief—Smallwood did his homework whereas his opponents so often neglected theirs.) But if we leave St. John's, the capital and the bastion of the middle-class influences in politics and religion, and take some clues from the vernacular, a rather different interpretation could be given to what was happening. First, perhaps Smallwood was telling a *cuffer* or a tall story.[2]

Properly told, a cuffer is not a lie; a cuffer is "news" and, properly told, will always reach an audience. Not everybody can cuffer. Smallwood is one who can. As Barrelman his cuffers were innocent enough and popularly legitimated, but the debates in the National Convention were in deadly earnest, and Smallwood's opponents there wanted to dismiss the idea of "Mr. Smallwood's Confederation" as a ridiculous cuffer. Smallwood's job was to make it a cuffer that would seize the imagination of outport Newfoundland like none ever had before. There was no surer way of doing this than by adding a *scoff* to the tail of this particular cuffer.

A scoff is an "extra" meal in several senses. It is especially good, it is an impromptu meal (perhaps late in the evening) over and above the daily menu; and—this is the sense in which we are interested—the food may have been *bucked,* that is, taken from someone else without his knowledge. Now, had not the merchants of Newfoundland, over generations, had a scoff at the expense of the fishermen? Was it not the fishermen's turn? Of course everyone suspected that there was not, after all, much to be bucked from the merchants. But Smallwood let the suggestion fall: there were the Canadians!

The cuffer and scoff are two specific forms of social interaction in rural Newfoundland culture, and each (but particularly the scoff) has metaphoric extensions, especially in the political domain, that Smallwood evoked throughout the campaign. With respect to the cuffer, Smallwood confesses that as the Barrelman "I hit on what was then, though it is no longer so much so, the common vein of Newfoundland's humour: the tall tale. This depends upon vast exaggeration" (*I Chose Canada* 207). As for the scoff as a metaphor of politics, it was less a case of Smallwood "hitting" on it than merely redirecting (knowingly or not) this aspect of the Newfoundland imagination in accordance with his message about changing times. For the reciprocal of the belief (whatever the facts) that politicians make their fortunes at the expense of those who elect them is the belief that people may take what little they can from their politicians. And Newfoundland politicians sometimes show that they believe no better behaviour can be expected from their constituents ([St. John's] *Evening Telegram,* 18 September, 1975).

The scoff, then, becomes extended into the political domain as a symbolic gesture of defiance or disrespect by the "ruled" towards their "rulers." And

Smallwood, whatever else he said in the Confederation campaign, was suggesting a change of rulers. A post-Confederation version of the ballad "Aunt Martha's Sheep" is of particular interest in this respect.[3] Aunt Martha reports the loss of her sheep to the Mounties with the result that both she and the investigating Mountie are "scoffed." The Mountie finds the culprits cooking the sheep, believes them when they tell him that it is a moose, accepts the invitation to join the feast ("He said 'thanks a lot' and he sat right down, and I gave him a piece of the sheep / 'This is the finest piece of moose I know I've ever eat'"), and on leaving pays his hosts the compliment, "'if everyone was as good as you, she wouldn't have lost her sheep.'"

Smallwood, then, invited Newfoundlanders (especially the rural majority) to think about Canada in a way that enabled him to move politics into the domestic domain. Here they could relate what was being proposed to their own experience. As we shall see, Smallwood played on the people's experience with bread-and-butter issues and, quite as important, on the local lore of cynicisms about politics. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that among Newfoundlanders the idea of Confederation possessed a special potency, or that it exercised an irresistible temptation. Indeed, it *was* a temptation for many—if one means by that a gratification whose price is perdition. For that reason, too, the idea was resisted.

Newfoundlanders sang about Canada as the wolf at their door. Canada was still a strange country to most Newfoundlanders (immigration to the mainland notwithstanding[4]), who saw her as an overbearing *parvenu,* unsympathetic to Newfoundland problems, in particular concerning her fisheries, and uncomprehending of Newfoundland history and tradition. The idea of Confederation with Canada had been rejected in the previous century by most of the electorate, so why should there be a change of mind now? What Newfoundland patriot would permit his country (however ill the times) to surrender her nationhood and to become a province of another country? Were not the Canadians who faced the shores of Newfoundland, in fact, French? Furthermore, what Newfoundlander would prejudice the historical connection with the "Old Country"? These were some of the rhetorical questions that were loudly voiced by the Anti-Confederate camp; and put into verse too:

> Don't vote Confederation, and that's my prayer to you,
> We own the house we live in, likewise the schooner too;
> But if you heed Joe Smallwood and his line of French patois,
> You'll be always paying taxes to the men in Ottawa.[5]

Behind the rhetoric lay the fears of many (though by no means all) businessmen, clergymen, politicians and government officials. They believed their personal fortunes and positions in Newfoundland society would fall should the island become part of Canada. So the common people were warned that if they became Canadians, they would not only have to swallow their

pride, but they would also have to pay Canadian taxes.

Many may have believed that they heard another warning as well, for the Newfoundland sense of pride has been mainly in the way things are, and has been cruelly entwined with a pervasive fear. The fear is that of retribution by the merchants and a whole class of "Them," loosely defined but associated with arbitrary power centred in St. John's. This fear of retribution had hung over any move to change things—with regard to the political issue in 1946-48—even from the way they were before 1934. Fishermen might listen to Smallwood's cuffer and enjoy it (even though this time it was about their future, not about their past—a past they themselves believed they knew so well). But why should they risk what they already had (little though it might be) for the sake of the scoff *he* invited them to?

Smallwood's problems, then, were (1) to make his promise credible: that the ordinary Newfoundlander would be vastly better off materially if Newfoundland became a Canadian province; (2) to still the fear in which the merchants and the gentry were held; and (3) to persuade Newfoundlanders that they could accept Canadian gifts (lower prices, social services, family allowances, old-age pensions, and others) while retaining their individual self-respect and their ethnic identity.

Aside from the few towns, his audience was the aggregate of small communities, but he knew that each community would make up its own mind about him and his proposal. The battle of Confederation was small-scale politics on a large scale, a fact that Smallwood exploited energetically—not only on the radio but by extensive travel as well. It is by considering the extent of regulation imposed by a community on the traditional cuffer and scoff that we can get a sense of the cultural constraints facing Smallwood in his enterprise (and his opponents in theirs).

Because a cuffer, properly told, is not a lie, only persons in good standing within the community are allowed to cuffer. Similarly, the self-indulgence of a scoff requires legitimation, which seems to be provided by the rule of sharing. A small group of people enjoy a scoff together. In the case where the food for a scoff is "bucked" (above), the diners share a joke as well as food; that such a scoff is not merely a stolen meal is shown by the fact that the only recourse open to the "victim" is to try to take the food back again, or to make a return scoff. This is "second plunder." There is second plunder in "Aunt Martha's Sheep," to which the sequel is in a "Canadian" ballad from Nova Scotia (Memorial University Folklore Archive).

Underlying these prerequisites of good standing and sharing, there is the rule that cuffers and scoffs are closed to strangers. In short, both cuffers and scoffs, although legitimate acts, border on the illegitimate. Such considerations come close to the essence of Newfoundland politics and to the play of politics in general.

Legitimation

Smallwood managed to convince many people in the outports about the disqualifications of his opponents: *they* were strangers, *they* did not share, *their* good standing in the community was hypocritical. He was able to do this from the Convention floor in St. John's, as well as from personal visits to individual outports.

> *Mr. Smallwood*: Mr. Chairman, as this present debate will be my last chance in the Convention to speak to the people of Newfoundland on this subject . . . (Interrupted)
>
> *Mr. Chairman*: Now Mr. Smallwood, never mind speaking to the people of Newfoundland. Speak to the Chair.
>
> *Mr. Smallwood*: Well, sir, I have never opened my mouth since this Convention started without speaking to the people, my masters who sent me here. I speak to them now through the Convention.
>
> *Mr. Chairman*: Address your remarks to me if you don't mind.
>
> *Mr. Smallwood*: I address the people through you, and you are therefore the most honoured man in this island.
>
> *Mr. Chairman*: That is a consequence of your addressing your remarks to me.
>
> *Mr. Smallwood*: I want to say a word on property taxes . . . .
>
> (National Convention, January 23, 1948
> as quoted in Neary 107-20)

Smallwood himself had little trouble with the stigmatic label of "stranger," and during the campaign he astutely avoided those places where he thought he would be ill-received (his campaign in St. John's was a necessary exception). He had always loved to talk and now even his weakness for exaggeration and his veritable rigmaroles of explanation ensured a good cuffer. He imparted closeness—not just familiarity but confidentiality. He took care always not to "speak down," and was intent on being understood by the slowest. Nor did he ever bewilder his audience with academic or literary allusions: there were no Latin tags, no club-room puns. He was familial. His speeches were egalitarian. His audiences began to hang on his words, perhaps because they seemed to convey deeds—just as the Barrelman's had a few years earlier. Despite his education and years in St. John's, Smallwood does not have a "typical" middle-class St. John's voice, and his countrywide audience could recognize he was "an outport speaker [by birth] from a non-Irish area."[6]

But what also counted was that here was a "learned" man who did not appear to the uneducated to be condescending. He was serious in what he had to say and yet "he didn't need Harry Hibbs [to keep their attention]!"[7] The challenge itself—of what he knew to be the fight of his life, of the vituperation of his important opponents (people were taking him seriously at last!), and of the leadership role he quickly assumed in the Confederate cause—served to

concentrate his efforts and to communicate to people an unmistakable sense of a man of destiny. Their destiny. He was fearless and passionate. His buoyancy and ambition were contagious.

Reflection upon his 1946-48 speeches suggests that Smallwood's aim was *not* to win over the National Convention, for there the Anti-Confederate majority was as much as 29 to 16. Accepting the fact that any appeal to the Anti-Confederates would be in vain, he evolved a quite different strategy: namely, to manoeuvre the National Convention—or its "twenty-nine dictators" as the Confederates dubbed their opponents—into a position that would alienate the broad Newfoundland public. Accordingly, in his long speech a few days before the dissolution of the Convention, we find him, time and again, bringing the issue of *legitimacy* to the forefront. Whose country? Whose futures? And . . . whose National Convention? He mocked the "legitimacy" of the rich of Newfoundland:

> . . . surely the opinion of a man worth a million dollars is worth a million times as much as the opinion of a man worth only one dollar, even on forms of government, or even advising our people how they should vote in the referendum.
> (National Convention, Jan. 23, 1948 Neary)

He compared it to the legitimacy of the common man:

> When we say we have a stake in the country we no longer mean how much money a man has, but how many children he has, what is the size of his family, what is his love for the country. (Jan. 23 Neary)

And he defied the assumptive legitimacy of the National Convention that dared to stand between the ordinary Newfoundlander and the future he wished for himself and his children:

> It is not up to a majority of this Convention to decide what our people shall vote on in the Referendum this Spring. . . . The British Government . . . knew very well that a minority of members here in the Convention might well represent a great majority of the population of the country, so the British Government very wisely kept to themselves the right to decide what should go on the ballot and what should not. In this way the democratic rights of the Newfoundland people have been preserved against usurpation. (Jan. 23 Neary)

Nor did Smallwood lose the opportunity (in the same speech) to associate the "Old Country" with the Confederate cause (just as he would refer to Canada as that "great British nation"):

> So I say to our Newfoundland people . . . and I say to the members of this Convention, that . . . the British Government will protect the democratic rights of our people against all attempts of a mere majority of this Convention. (Jan. 23 Neary)

On the sensitive question of Newfoundland pride, where he could be (and was) accused of trying to "sell out" the Newfoundland heritage, he took great risks—asking, in effect, *what* heritage? On the Convention floor, already in 1946, he pointed this finger:

> We take for granted our lower standards, our poverty. We are not indignant about them. We save our indignation for those who publish such facts . . . . We are all very proud of our Newfoundland people . . . but are we indignant, does our blood boil, when we see the lack of common justice with which they are treated? When we see how they live? When we witness the long, grinding struggle they have? When we see the standards of their life? Have we compassion in our hearts for them? Or are we so engrossed, so absorbed, in our own [affairs] . . . ?
>
> (Oct. 28 as quoted in *I Chose Canada* 255-61)

In urging the people of the outports not to be afraid, he spoke of the merchants. He told the people it was the merchants themselves who had cause to be afraid, and he added:

> These monopolistic traders . . . sit and shiver in their stylish offices for fear Confederation will come and sweep their monopolies into the ashcan of history. (Jan. 23, 1948 Neary)

To make his promise or prophecy credible, he would pile statistic upon statistic, and he would also use the following procedure:

> At meeting after meeting, Smallwood cajoled children onto the stage beside him, and made a great show of asking their names and ages. Then, holding one child by the hand, he would turn to the audience and say: 'Now, Peter. You are eight, and you have two brothers and one sister, all under sixteen. When Confederation comes, your mother, Mrs. X., will receive every month, $22.00 to look after you, to buy your clothes, to buy your food.' He then repeated this procedure with each child on the platform. (Gwyn 98)

He took as much care to break any association between Confederation and high taxation (property tax was particularly feared) and to dispel misgivings that outport people would have about the imposition of taxes at the whim of "government"—and not even of a Newfoundland government. Thus we find him turning the punitive matter of taxation into one of local self-government:

> Mr. Claude Hicks of Fredericton, in Fogo District, says, for example that he has a house, a barn and two acres of land, and he wants to know what tax he will have to pay on that property under Confederation.
>
> I cannot answer that question until I know if the people of Fredericton will decide to have a Town Council. If the Fredericton people, including Mr. Hicks, should decide to have a Town Council, then perhaps the Town Council will collect a small tax on his property—maybe a five dollar bill a year, or whatever the Town Council decides. Maybe Mr. Hicks would be elected a member of that Town Council. If so

he would help to decide what tax to put on his property.

But if Fredericton decides not to have a Town Council, then there will be no tax at all on Mr. Hicks' property, for there is no one to collect a tax on it. The Government of Canada will not tax his property, the Provincial Government of Newfoundland will not tax it—so who is there to tax it if there is no Town Council in Fredericton?

And remember that it is left to the people of Fredericton to decide whether they will have a Town Council or not—it is up to themselves. (Jan. 23, 1948 Neary)

Peroration

Smallwood knew how to perorate across a wide rhetorical register—purple tones for the Convention, perhaps, but something quite different for the people. On the eve of the dissolution of the Convention, he likened Confederation to "a new hope for the common man," and concluded in the bathos of a reading of William Blake's "Jerusalem." In the outports in the last days before the polls (fifty-six speeches in two and a half days), speaking now of "you" rather than "we," his argument would run something like this: Newfoundlanders are tough, except the "Ches Crosbies"—a reference to the head of a merchant clan (a patron of Smallwood's in the 1930s) who was campaigning against Confederation, not for Responsible Government but for Economic Union with the United States; it did not reach the ballot paper as an option. Crosbie's campaign slogan was "Give Ches a chance." Newfoundlanders should not accept handouts, he would continue, though that is about all they ever got from the "Ches Crosbies." Now they will get what they deserve and what their pride dictates: something better. He made it quite clear that all would share in his scoff (that is, Confederation)—each settlement and every household.

You will not be voting for me, and you'll not be voting to "give Ches a chance." Don't you bother about me or Ches or anyone else—you bother about yourself tomorrow . . . Give Ches a chance, indeed! And how do you go about giving Ches a chance? By voting for Responsible Government as it existed in 1933, with all the dole and dole bread? I don't think Ches was on the dole in 1933—he didn't have to eat the dole bread. You had to. . . . And if Responsible Government as it existed in 1933 wins tomorrow, it's not Ches who'll have to go on the dole and eat the dole bread; not likely. You know who will be going on the dole . . . . (On the hustings, June 2 and again July 21, 1948; *I Chose Canada* 302)

The Outcome

In truth, Confederation had a broadcast birth. The islanders made the "Barrelman" their first premier. Without drawing breath while all the time tightening his spell over his audience, he started "a great loud hullaballoo that this is the province of the future" (Richardson 22)—and he never once let up during more than a quarter of a century.

Structure—Metaphor and Metonymy

Our narrative has really been a celebration of Smallwood as Hero. But he is as much Fox as Lion (Pareto) and it is especially the Fox that we must try to keep in sight. It was not the enterprise itself, or radio itself, as much as the handling of the message of the enterprise that begat potency. Here Smallwood may have duped his audiences to a degree, but this is only to say that he approached them along a line on which they were exposed: our narrative focused on the attention he gave to the "psychology" of rural Newfoundland audiences, and upon his ability in this regard, rather than upon the psychology of the man himself. I do not mean to imply that Smallwood's own personality does not intrude in the picture. It does, all the time. He is, for example, a "natural" at telling cuffers and may be depended upon to do so whatever the audience. However, I am more interested in this essay in the resources of his personality as I suppose they were "applied" by him to his audiences, and in the audiences' perception and evaluation of his personality.

In his message there were switches between emotion and fact, high and low keys; content was made relevant through his finding the appropriate form. This form involved, first, the use of a verbal tradition, the cuffer, in which things could be said for their greatest effect; and second, the use of a cultural allusion from which the audience itself could draw its own interpretation of what was being said—the scoff.

I turn now to a closer analysis of the semantic structure of Smallwood's rhetoric, drawing upon material that is not confined to the campaign years, 1946 to 1948. What should be kept in mind is that even though Smallwood addressed himself publicly to "progress" and could demonstrate it materially, notably in the decade following Confederation, there was little change in the values of his audiences. Part of the explanation is that after Confederation, Smallwood himself wished to keep a tight rein on any *cognitive change* that he saw would lead to further political change; he was largely successful in this—and his speeches were an important instrument in his design. A key factor was the uses Smallwood made of metaphor and metonym, respectively, as instruments of cognitive control (see Paine, "The Political Uses of Metaphors and Metonym").

Ideology

In Smallwood's campaign speeches between 1946 and 1948, there were metaphors embedded in the structure, which implied that *politics are like a scoff*; and whatever he said he had to leave it to his public to evaluate (as happens with metaphors) according to "tradition": there was no time for anything else. As he delivered them, however, his speeches were decidedly literal, and metaphoric adornment was sparse (especially when outside the Convention). The years of political power did little to change this. On the one hand, he seems content in his speeches to let the traditional rules of life prevail, even while assuming the roles of prophet and reformer (Gwyn, *passim*); and

on the other hand, he reveals an oratorical style that is markedly *ametaphorical.* He manages to say what something is without saying what it is like. He prefers to count rather than to estimate. Perhaps his favourite word has always been *biggest*—suggestive of progress with continuity, triumphant continuity. For this reason when he describes something as "new," as he often does, he seems to want it to mean, wherever possible, better rather than different. I think part of the explanation has to do with his non-ideological approach to politics, or rather, a fundamentally non-intellectual approach to political ideology: "I am not one of those who consider that the particular form of government at any given time makes much difference of a fundamental nature . . . . Governments are artificial and superficial things at best. It is the genius of a people that counts" ("Newfoundland To-day" in *The Book of Newfoundland* 1.2-3).

Such an approach to ideology may be attributed, in part, to Smallwood's own absorption in what we may call the Newfoundland political psyche, as well as to the deliberate attention he pays to the psyche. At all events, his ideology is what he terms "progress," and his view of progress is material: he once used as proof of progress in Newfoundland the installation of 744 indoor toilets in the schools (*To You* 37). Far from using metaphor to provide novel symbolic frames, Smallwood keeps to simple, concrete, familiar (domestic) frames. On occasion he seems even at pains *not* to show his metaphors. At first sight this may be surprising, for Smallwood encourages one—in his devotion to progress, for instance—to suppose that he is solidly on the side of change, and to speak about change ordinarily implies metaphor. In fact, recognizing the "conservatism" of Newfoundland society, he used it as a means of ruling and, accordingly, chose to disturb it as little as possible. So at the same time as Newfoundland pride recovered under Smallwood, "tribal" parochialisms on the island found shelter under his government. Notable, for example, was the quiescence of Smallwood regarding denominationalism as a basis for education and, even, for selection (by appointment or election) to public office.

Comparison with Sukarno

Smallwood's rhetoric successfully sustained traditional cognitive categories alongside a sense of betterment for the people—*even a sense of change itself.* The key, as I have indicated, is the absence of metaphor. In this regard it is worth glancing at an historic example of rhetoric in which the use of metaphor *is* all-important. The task of President Sukarno of Indonesia was to weld together in one political and cultural frame the many different traditions and divisive forces of traditional Indonesia; and (following Geertz 64) novel metaphors were used by Sukarno "to match the myriad 'unfamiliar somethings' that, like a journey into a strange country, are produced by a transformation in political life." The political efficacy of this strategy depends upon the power of metaphor to "symbolically coerce" discordant meanings into a unitary conceptual framework (Geertz 59).

Smallwood, compared with Sukarno, was heir to a homogeneous constituency in which a sense of "one people" was historical; there was less need for metaphor. There is, too, a political advantage in avoiding metaphor, for as a way of proceeding from the unknown to the known, metaphor provokes us into thought; but how does the politician control the thought which his metaphors stir? In other words, at the same time as metaphor joins discordant meanings in discourse, it is as likely, at the level of political action, to assist their continuance. It means that the process of coercion, to which Geertz refers, remains incomplete. This happened in the Indonesian case. For Sukarno, such a possibility was a risk (and compromise) he had to take as the architect who would construct a nation out of many cultures. Smallwood did not have to take this risk.

The contrast between Indonesia and Newfoundland also helps explain Smallwood's apparent disinterest in political ideology. The planned "confederation" of Indonesia took place in an "ideological din" (Geertz 75) and Sukarno assumed an ideological mission. This means (to simplify this part of Geertz's argument) he came to an imperfect world and attempted to change it by providing it with new "authoritative concepts" with which to "formulate, think about, and react to political problems" (63; 65). But where, as in Smallwood's Newfoundland, " 'ancient opinions and rules of life' [prevail,] the role of ideology, in any explicit sense, is marginal" (63). We may also expect the role of metaphor in politics to be marginal in these circumstances.

Control

Another reason for Smallwood not adopting a metaphoric style is the mistrust Newfoundlanders seem to show towards metaphoric speech from their politicians. Even throughout the generations of a truck (credit) system, Newfoundland politicians spoke as though work and fortune were related, as though work would produce money; but often this was not true. The politician had therefore been seen as trading a dishonest metaphor. Smallwood, by contrast, determined that his words would have an honesty and a reality that would be recognized and acknowledged. At times this meant putting a "plainness" into his speeches. Yet *his* words were usually backed by money (from federal sources, which he dispensed as though he were the patron).

Smallwood saw the distrust of Newfoundlanders as a symptom of their conservatism, and he wished to replace distrust with trust as its symptom. We know that before Confederation he recognized in Newfoundlanders a characteristic lack of political co-operativeness among themselves: "Is it not true that we have been intensely, bitterly individualistic . . . ? Have we not failed almost completely in the one virtue that the modern world has made an absolute essential: the ability and desire to co-operate to achieve a commonly desired end?" (*I Chose Canada* 2). Now that he was Premier, his political answer to this was to assume, symbolically, the role of *paterfamilias*.

For both of the reasons mentioned—(i) so as not to disturb a slumbering

political awareness or, at any rate, not to lose control over its awakening, and (ii) so as not to let it be believed that he, like all politicians before him, was deceiving the people—Smallwood turned not to metaphor as much as to its sister trope, *metonymy*. In metonyms, the whole is expressed through its parts and, by extension, the parts are related to each other. In this way a politician has a better chance of controlling the boundaries of discourse, but it means paying careful attention to the cultural context of the political scene. Let us consider, then, Smallwood's style of "metonymics" (see also Paine, "The Mastery of Smallwood and Interlocutory Rhetoric").

Style and Context

Through metonymy Smallwood drew upon a rhetorical form that was in accord with the way Newfoundlanders experience their cosmos and their society. There is a developed scheme of reference to things within the horizon rather than beyond—things within sight when not actually within touch, or within hearing when not actually in sight (G. M. Story, personal com.). This has its social corollary and, to illustrate it, I purloin a passage from Hoggart that describes working-class life of an earlier decade in the north of England, but catches exactly the ambience of rural life in Newfoundland (cf. Butler; Russell; Scammell);

> Other people may live a life of 'getting and spending,' or a 'literary life,' or 'the life of the spirit,' or even 'the balanced life,' if there is such a thing. If we want to capture something of the essence of working-class [read: rural Newfoundland] life in such a phrase, we must say that it is the 'dense and concrete life,' a life whose main stress is on the intimate, the sensory, the detailed, and the personal. (104-05)

To create emotion, Smallwood's rule seemed to be that it is essential to be specific; and his specificity has its own cadence as in, for example, ". . . my speeches were admittedly emotional, intended to appeal to the people's emotions. I can't deny it—and I haven't any desire to deny it" (*I Chose Canada* 304). One finds scholars writing of the techniques of rhetoric in much the way that Smallwood practised them. For example:

> to create emotion, it is essential to be specific . . . the simplest figures for increasing the feeling of presence are those depending on *repetition*. . . . Far more instrumental than mere repetition of words in obtaining the feeling of presence is the use of *amplification*: by this we mean the oratorical development of a theme, irrespective of the exaggeration that people generally associate with it. . . . Similarly *synonymy*—the repetition of a single idea by means of different words—conveys presence by using a form that suggests progressive correction. . . . A very similar figure to this is *interpretatio*, the explanation of one expression by another, not so much for purposes of clarification as to increase the feeling of presence.
>
> (Perelman 147, 174-76; emphases in original)

From this perspective, the repetitiveness in Smallwood's speeches, likely to strike an outsider as boring, are really blows on an anvil of metonymy. (There were, of course, Newfoundlanders who were genuinely bored by Smallwood's style or rhetoric, others who were more embarrassed than bored, and yet others who professed boredom while showing much aggravation. These people—the bored, the embarrassed and the indignant—tended to be drawn from the small urban middle class: not for them the scoff or the cuffer.)

The same is true of his literalism. Far from causing loss of attention to what he is saying, it can sustain that attention, and Smallwood, sensing the poetry as well as the logic in metonymy, has been audacious in his literalism. This is nowhere better illustrated than in the "number" passages in his speeches. He *counts* progress, and a "million dollars" (of which there were many in the flow of Canadian "development" to Smallwood's Newfoundland) is likely to be the trigger for five minutes of high rhetoric. This is not surprising given the concreteness of figures and Smallwood's political wish to make money yield reality. His rhetoric tells us that until you count money, you do not know you have it; and it seems that only by counting it aloud, will you know *what* you have.

The specificity, spiced with hyperbole, and the repetition are as characteristic of his writing (the prime example is *To You with Affection*) as of his speaking. His "serious" writings (for example, *I Chose Canada*) suffer for it, but Newfoundlanders "hear" rather than read, and certainly to hear Smallwood is an experience. What they heard was very close to their own folk ballad. Consider, for instance, the parallel structure of the following two passages. Excerpted from longer pieces, both continue in the same vein throughout: the one is a ghost story and the other, by Smallwood, a dirge about taxation. Both are bare of metaphor and their messages are conveyed by naming a series of "part-to-whole" relationships.

> He firked around and found a match and with a trembling hand
> He got the chimney off the lamp and found the washing stand,
> Inside of which the chamber pot could be his garbage tin,
> So he sot back and lit his pipe and felt all bold again.
> Before he'd have another smoke he'd eat his cheese and toast
> And then decide when he'd turn in and prove there is no ghost. (Earle 60)

The Smallwood piece below is from his campaign for Confederation. It was written as a letter to the editor of a St. John's newspaper; the bracketed percentages indicate the rates of customs duty on goods imported into New-

foundland.

> Dear Sir: The alarm clock (60%) rang noisily at 7:45. Bill Doakes stirred, then woke up. He threw the bed clothes (40%) off him and the mattress (50%) creaked as he leapt out of bed (50%). Picking up his eye-glasses (65%) from the chair (65%) he put on his slippers and hurried over to the window. He let the blind (50%) slip up with a whirl and pushed the curtain (50%) aside. He saw as he looked through the glass (45%) that it was a fair morning. (*I Chose Canada* 298)

As a choice of political strategy, Smallwood's use of metonymy over metaphor is a preference for direct over indirect rule and for demonstration over influence. Accordingly, he liked to display not only the effects of political power but also the instruments through which it was achieved and maintained, and he made it quite clear—once Premier—that he himself was the principal instrument of his political power. Thus his demonstrations of power were demonstrations of self—and were essentially rhetorical. Driven both by the logic and aesthetics of this position, he would even seek to demonstrate how he was *now* what his critics might suppose him to be. For example, there is the story of an evening when for once he faced a hostile Newfoundland audience (not a middle-class one): "You think I *am* the devil!" To prove he was not, Smallwood removed a shoe and sock: "See! no cloven *hoof!*" That his predilection for rhetorical demonstration—through recourse to literalism and metonymy—could be taken to such apparently bizarre lengths affirms for us the importance Smallwood attached to rhetoric as a mode of *action* (see Paine "When Saying is Doing"). Indeed, the hostile audience of that evening gave Smallwood a standing ovation before going home.

On occasion, however, Smallwood chose metaphor over metonymy, and there is a discernible political logic about these choices. He would be likely to choose a metaphor to *deflate* an opposition ideology. Thus, in 1946, from the floor of the Convention, he asserted: "Our danger, so it seems to me, is that of nursing delusions of grandeur. . . . We can, of course, persist in isolation, a dot on the shore of North America, the Funks of the North American continent . . ." (Oct. 28). The Funks are a group of remote ocean rocks off the northeast coast of Newfoundland populated only by guillemots or murres (Newfoundland turrs). He would use metaphor to *put away* an enemy, for example, Diefenbaker, when he was Prime Minister of Canada (for the political duel between Smallwood and Diefenbaker, see Gwyn Ch. 17)—whereas he would use metonymy to include others in the Newfoundland family (Prime Minister St. Laurent was introduced to St. John's audiences as "uncle"). Similarly, he would find metaphors to "explain" matters that were *not* tractable to his scheme of things. For example, Smallwood was not particularly successful, or confident, when dealing with the problems of the Newfoundland fisheries, and he passed judgement upon the sea itself in this metaphoric allusion: "that vast field which man has ploughed since time immemorial—but to what effect?" (G. M. Story, personal com.). Elections, of course, *should* be

tractable occasions in the Smallwood scheme and they usually were; but in 1968, he suffered "his" first electoral defeat since he had become premier—and although it was a federal election, it hurt. He had to redeem himself and he coined a metaphor on that occasion that includes in its imagery a natural return, soon enough, to *status quo ante*. "The tide is out," he said.

Important as they sometimes were, metaphors, then, had only a secondary role in Smallwood's rhetoric. This was especially true as his political power developed. In sum, he came to preside over a polity that itself could be characterized, with little distortion, as a metonymic state (see Paine "The Mastery of Smallwood and Interlocutory Rhetoric").

Conclusions

Smallwood's role in Newfoundland society extended beyond the reaches of what is ordinarily identified as the political domain. In the change from British colony to Canadian province, Smallwood was the "knowledgeable companion" (Geertz) who enabled Newfoundlanders to join the Canadian Confederation with the least possible strain or confusion, cognitively speaking. He spoke in a way that kept symbolic mediation simple. His audiences did not have to become Canadians in order to understand him. Thus, at the same time as Smallwood led the way, his rhetoric brought an unexpected subtlety to his relations with those he led; he created the illusion of himself not only as a prophet but also a kind of *tabula rasa* on which Newfoundlanders "wrote" messages about their identity and their aspirations (we find here a continuation of his original Barrelman role). This "writing" would then be held up to them, by Smallwood himself, as a mirror into which they gazed. It was by such means that the subsequent myth about his style of government—the people ask, the government delivers—was sustained. Wherever it was politically necessary, Smallwood (in all likelihood using the indicative to invoke the imperative mood among his audience) would "tell" his audience what to ask. He was also concerned to keep his reputation of always being available, and he certainly did open his door generously and without ceremony, if discriminately.

One way or another, almost everything pertaining to Newfoundland was explained in terms of Smallwood during the years of his reign: even the various transfer payments (pensions, family allowances and welfare payments) that the Canadian government makes to individual citizens became widely associated with the *mana* emanating from "Joey." When it came to explaining Smallwood himself, only outsiders resorted to metaphor (in Canadian journalism, he was sometimes "Kwame Nkrumah of Newfoundland"). Among Newfoundlanders, no symbols—other than Confederation itself—were constructed to "explain" this polysemic master-symbol: Smallwood was *sui generis* and appropriately so, for he was the chosen leader of a people who, I think, regard themselves not as "great" but "unique." Among them, Smallwood simply *is*.

Notes

[1]In this connection I wish to thank the late David Alexander, Rex Clark and Thomas Nemec for comments on an earlier draft—and especially William Kirwin (not all of whose suggestions, on the linguistic side, have I been able to act upon at this time). Another special debt is to George Story whose knowledge of the cognitive map of Newfoundland would be quite unsettling were it not for the generosity with which he shares it with anthropologists. Kirwin and Story also let me read relevant draft entries from their *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*; Michael Taft kindly provided me with information on the ballad "Aunt Martha's Sheep."

[2]My attention was first called to the sociological properties of *cuffer* and *scoff* by James Faris' monograph and articles.

[3]See Taft for discussion of the text, history and folkloric circumstances of this ballad.

[4]Even the emigration to Canada was played down. Although the principal destination of Newfoundland emigrants was always Canada, and not the U.S.A. (though there is a large Newfoundland colony in Boston) popular myth had (and has) it otherwise. Among several possible explanations, David Alexander (personal com.) included the following: "If the myth is maintained that Boston is the destination of emigrants, this serves to protect Newfoundland's identity from the enduring threat of Canada." Alexander also noted how the emigration myth was paralleled by the trade myth: that the United States was a more important trading partner than Canada.

[5]The Confederates had at least as good a Muse. See volume five of Smallwood's *The Book of Newfoundland* for a selection of verses about Confederation and Responsible Government.

[6]William Kirwin (personal com.); Kirwin adds "Smallwood has a 1905-1915 educated outport Protestant type of accent, refined by the rest of North America."

[7]George Story (personal com.). Hibbs, of course, is the popular Newfoundland folk singer; he performed on behalf of the P.C. party in the 1972 provincial election campaign.

[8]Although there is an element of ambiguity hanging over the matter, Smallwood was not entirely accurate about the jurisdiction of the National Convention, and some clarification is perhaps necessary. A delegation from the Convention had gone to Ottawa and the option of Confederation had been debated at length on the Convention floor, but the motion to include it on the referendum ballot was defeated. It found its place there in March 1948 (after the Convention had dissolved) on the instruction of the Commonwealth Relations Secretary, Philip Noel-Baker. Meanwhile, Smallwood had organized a mass "wire-in" protest against the "twenty-nine dictators" and their deliberate exclusion of the Confederation option; just short of 50,000 names were on a petition handed to the Governor of Newfoundland. Gwyn takes the story further:

> London took its time about replying [to the petition]. . . . One reason for the delay was the need to make discreet inquiries to determine the Canadian attitude. The response was favourable. Whitehall also had to justify contradicting *the stated purpose of the National Convention, which had been to recommend the wording of the ballot paper* [emphasis added]. At last, on March 10, the Commonwealth Relations Secretary, Philip Noel-Baker, announced that since "it would not be right to deprive the people of the opportunity of considering the issue," and "having regard to the number of members of the Convention who supported the inclusion of Confederation with Canada on the ballot paper," it would be so included.
>
> (94-95)

[9]The decision went to two referenda. In the first (June 3, 1948), the *status quo* option of continued administration from Whitehall dropped out and Confederation trailed Responsible Government; in the second (July 22, 1948), Confederation squeezed home in front of Responsible Government with 52.3 percent against 47.66 percent of the popular vote. Almost 85 percent of those eligible cast ballots in the second referendum.

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