

# The Rise and Fall of Memorial University's Extension Service, 1959–91

Jeff A. Webb

Volume 29, numéro 1, printemps 2014

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1062246ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1062246ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Faculty of Arts, Memorial University

ISSN

1719-1726 (imprimé)

1715-1430 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Webb, J. (2014). The Rise and Fall of Memorial University's Extension Service, 1959–91. *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, 29(1).  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1062246ar>

# **The Rise and Fall of Memorial University's Extension Service, 1959–91**

JEFF A. WEBB

Founded in 1959, Memorial University of Newfoundland's Extension Service embodied an optimism that universities could foster social change, and the belief that Memorial University had a special obligation to help modernize the province. Extension was an outreach arm of the university that supported community development and employed innovative approaches to do so.

By 1969 its influence in the province and in the university peaked. The celebrated Fogo Process, which had grown out of a collaboration with the National Film Board (NFB), had developed methods for using film and video as community development tools that were later adopted in many parts of the world. In its heyday, it not only engaged in the kinds of educational outreach common to many universities, but also provoked rural people to take an active part in organizing their communities. Extension director Donald Snowden had an international reputation as an innovative development agent, and Premier Joseph Smallwood's biographer credited Extension with having prompted the social changes that brought his term in power to an end.<sup>1</sup> The defining characteristics of MUN Extension had broader and deeper roots than just the genius of Snowden and the NFB's Colin Low, the famous Canadian filmmaker.<sup>2</sup> During its peak years Extension successfully competed for resources within the university because the members of Extension had achieved cultural capital through their broadly acknowledged understanding of rural Newfoundland and abilities to use media technologies as tools for social change. This prestige enabled it to play a role in the modernization of the province.<sup>3</sup> By the 1980s, changes in the rural areas of the province made Extension seem less important than it had once been, and other units within the university won the competition for scarce resources. MUN Extension was once able to do things that no

government department could, and its high degree of autonomy encouraged experimentation, and action, but by 1991 the organization's successes seemed like a relic of an earlier era and it became a victim of a harsh fiscal climate.

While Extension's rural economic development work has attracted the most attention from the mass media and historians, Extension's efforts to encourage the arts also had a substantial effect on the province. Susan Newhook pointed out that the Fogo Process had an important role in fostering the cultural revival of the 1970s, and Mekaela Gulliver has shown many of the ways that Extension supported artists and musicians.<sup>4</sup> Extension played a crucial role in fostering the cultural industries in St. John's, and artists based in the city were some of the most vocal protestors in 1991 when the university closed the unit. Twenty years later, many of those who worked for Extension shared a nostalgia for an exciting period of their working lives. A few alumni felt resentment towards the university administrators who shut Extension down, and shared a self-image as rebels who had faced the animosity of bureaucrats in government and university alike. They felt that the federal and provincial governments' efforts to modernize the province and its administration during the Smallwood years, along with a willingness to support experiments in development, provided the conditions in which Extension thrived. The prevailing North American attitudes towards community activism, and the needs of rural communities, shaped the organization as much as did government priorities. Government officials in Ottawa and St. John's used Extension to modernize outposts, and during the 1960s and early 1970s democratic empowerment seemed to have great potential to aid communities and individuals in adjusting to new conditions. Interviews with former Extension members reveal their perception that the interests of the people and the government were not always aligned, and that they saw themselves as on the people's side, not the side of the bureaucrats.

Despite its important role in fostering social and cultural change in the years since 1949, Memorial University has yet to have its historian, and little has been written on MUN Extension.<sup>5</sup> Yet, an extensive body of uncatalogued records of MUN Extension are currently in the custody of the Archives and Special Collections Division of the Queen Elizabeth II Library at Memorial University, the fonds of several fieldworkers are extant, and many of the films and videos created by Extension's media unit are available for viewing. However, a recent study was prompted by three former members of Extension, George Lee, Paul MacLeod, and Harvey Best, who approached the Harris Centre at Memorial for help in putting their memories into the public record. They shared a concern that the institutional memory of their work had been erased

when the university closed Extension. Disappointment over the dismantling of their unit further encouraged them to believe that they had long had enemies in the provincial government, and that bureaucratic hostility accounted for the university's decision. They suspected that the academic administrators responsible for the decision to close the Extension unit hoped to end the controversy over their decision by its being forgotten. Their inquiry prompted three MUN faculty members, Terry Bishop-Stirling, David Close, and Jeff Webb, to undertake a research study of Extension, albeit one with a broader and independent mandate. They were awarded a research grant, received ethics approval, and hired Mekaela Gulliver to interview former Extension employees during 2010 and 2011 and John Cheeseman to survey the undescribed archival information.<sup>6</sup> Lee, MacLeod, and Best were interviewed about their own careers; they suggested the names of several former colleagues who could be interviewed, and additional names were suggested, in turn, by those people. Several different generations of Extension employees set out their stories. They included those who worked in several different capacities, and a few others who we judged were in a position to provide an informed perspective from outside the unit. The interviews were open-ended; people were free to speak about their lives and careers in their own ways. This provided an opportunity to explore the memories of a diverse group of 16 men and 11 women to discover their points of view from a vantage point of more than 20 years after Extension was closed. A preliminary report focused on the lessons the example of MUN Extension might have for "public engagement" was filed with the Harris Centre.<sup>7</sup>

This essay stems from that study and draws on the research underlying it in order to provide an assessment of Extension. It shows that in the early 1960s MUN Extension became an agent of the provincial and federal governments in encouraging change in rural Newfoundland. Working for the state, however, did not prevent people from having independence of thought and action. In keeping with the spirit of the late 1960s and 1970s, Extension simultaneously implemented government policy while giving power to people to either take advantage of government programs or resist the state. In the process, Extension spawned many non-governmental organizations such as rural development councils. Governments gained community leaders they could work with to implement public policy, while the autonomy of the local agencies allowed them the choice of accommodating or resisting federal and provincial initiative. The autonomy from government and Extension's mastery of communications technologies allowed it to shape the public sphere.

## PRELUDES TO EXTENSION

MUN Extension was a continuation of earlier efforts to help rural people help themselves; long before there were any post-secondary institutions in Newfoundland, efforts were made to improve people's economic prospects through adult education.<sup>8</sup> With its founding in 1925, Memorial University College's first President, J.L. Paton, believed that educating the working class could make them more self-reliant. Paton brought in fellow British educator Albert Mansbridge to lecture on adult education, which encouraged the formation of the Newfoundland Adult Education Association. The NAEA used fieldworkers in rural communities during the 1930s.<sup>9</sup> James Overton argues that this self-help educational movement was as much motivated by a desire to control the working class and prevent the spread of communism as it was to empower the people.<sup>10</sup> The Newfoundland-born and Columbia University-educated Florence O'Neill also developed a proposal for adult education. While some of her ideas were implemented by her employer, the Department of Adult Education, the Commissioner of Home Affairs and Education vetoed the publication of her proposed manual for fieldworkers because he objected to her criticism of the business and church institutions. In 1945, O'Neill arranged for a professor from Columbia, Pers Stensland, and another from Wisconsin (which was a pioneer in university outreach) to lecture at Memorial on facilitating community co-operation. Stensland praised the Newfoundland adult educators for recognizing that people in the outports had to shape the educational program if it were to be successful.<sup>11</sup>

Both non-governmental organizations and the state also fostered co-operatives as a tactic to make people independent. The philanthropist physician Wilfred Grenfell had founded a co-operative in Red Bay, Labrador, in 1896, hoping to provide an alternative to the domination of merchant capital, which he saw as responsible for both social and economic ills.<sup>12</sup> Aware of the successes of co-operatives in England and Nova Scotia, Newfoundlanders such as William Browne also encouraged co-operatives in Newfoundland during the 1930s. (The links between the Roman Catholic Church and the Antigonish Movement would have been positive factors to Browne, but Protestants in Newfoundland may have thought the St. Francis Xavier University model less attractive.<sup>13</sup>) The Commission of Government supported a study of the potential for co-operatives in Newfoundland by Margaret Digby, of the Irish-based Horace Plunkett Foundation, which led to the foundation of a Co-operative Division of the Newfoundland government. Indeed, government

policy since the Amulree Report of 1933, which recommended the establishment of the Commission of Government, had been to encourage a cultural change among rural people not only by educating them in modern productive methods but also in fostering a greater spirit of co-operation with each other and independence of government aid. The Commission of Government believed co-ops could allow rural people to become self-reliant and in the 1930s recruited members of the Antigonish Movement as co-operative fieldworkers. The government-owned radio station was also used to communicate self-help messages to rural people.<sup>14</sup> The economic recovery that came with World War II prompted the Commission to cut back on the Co-operative Division's resources, but this did not end the Commission's use of co-operatives or adult education as means to achieve rural economic development.

Many Newfoundlanders of Joseph Smallwood's generation shared his vision for the role of Memorial University — that of an agent of modernization of the province, which would foster individual and community independence and self-reliance. An autodidact and a nationalist intellectual, after 1949 Smallwood supported the university both as a force for education and as a symbol that Newfoundland was becoming modern. Smallwood had long admired William Coaker's Fishermen's Protective Union and had attempted to organize a co-operative on the Bonavista Peninsula during the Depression. He was a liberal who saw himself a socialist, and hoped co-operatives would play a role in rejuvenating rural areas, while at the same time hoping foreign industrial capital would modernize the economy.<sup>15</sup> Within months of Smallwood being sworn in as Premier, Moses Coady of the Antigonish Movement was a keynote speaker at the inaugural meeting of the Fisheries Federation in St. John's that Smallwood organized.<sup>16</sup> The Premier also appointed his old ally, William Keough, as minister of a combined Department of Fisheries and Co-operatives. Keough had been a government co-operative fieldworker during the 1940s. To an extent not always remembered, Smallwood's economic development strategy in the first couple of years of his government involved co-operative efforts. To resolve the dilemma of having government agents trying to encourage people to help themselves rather than look to government, Smallwood hoped Memorial University would create an extension department. That idea received the approval of Robert Newton, who the university brought in to make recommendations for its future development. Smallwood's suggestion that Memorial create an Extension Department (a "School of Revolution") was greeted as an opportunity by O'Neill, who at that point led the province's adult education division. She also suggested the Premier bring in an expert from Columbia University to

assess the possibilities. More than a decade before the university's Extension Service was founded, she had proposed building on the University of Wisconsin model and having fieldworkers undertake adult education in rural communities, but there is no evidence of a link between her proposal and later developments.<sup>17</sup>

Smallwood rarely intervened in the day-to-day administration of Memorial, not because he was uninterested in what was going on at the university, or because he had some principled respect for academic autonomy, but because urgent issues dominated his calendar. At times he made his preferences known. The government prompted the university to hire Raymond W. Miller, a sometime instructor at the Harvard Business School and employee of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization, to consult on the creation of an Extension Department. Miller recommended to the Board of Regents in January of 1953 a service tailored to Newfoundland's situation, rather than copying a service from another jurisdiction. He focused on the use of an extension service to foster the co-operative movement, proposing, for example, that the government fund a university extension service since "experience shows that cooperatives cannot be as successfully promoted by government as by a university through extension."<sup>18</sup> He also thought that local groups in rural areas should bear part of the costs of the services delivered by the Extension Service, so that they would appreciate the work rather than feel that, as a free service, it had no value. By expecting communities to organize themselves and then ask for aid from the Extension Service, he thought, people would appreciate what was being done for them. Miller believed that existing institutions, such as the Fishermen's Union and such new organizations that Extension could encourage, should be enlisted to work with them. Consistent with both long-standing Newfoundland government policy and the activities of extension services elsewhere, he particularly emphasized the development of agriculture. An "Agricultural Garden Program" could be used, he believed, to "get the women interested in this part of the program," something of particular importance since the success of Extension plans throughout the world, he suggested, was "in direct proportion to the interest of the women."<sup>19</sup> By tailoring the educational programs to what people wanted, rather than imposing a centralized view of what was good for them, and by making use of radio and television, people could be reached with information they wanted in cost-effective ways. Miller also appended a second report, by his son Robert, on the potential for radio, television, and film for mass education.<sup>20</sup> The younger Miller also thought that a library of instructional films could be created.

## THE BIRTH OF EXTENSION

Smallwood had become frustrated with Memorial President Raymond Gushue's cautious pace of growth at the university, and publicly criticized MUN for taking so long to establish an extension unit. He had even gone so far as to say that Memorial should be "an Extension Department with a university tacked onto it, not the other way round."<sup>21</sup> Not only was this a priority for Smallwood, but he seemed to want Memorial to take responsibility for several areas of economic development that were the responsibility of provincial officials in other provinces.<sup>22</sup> With pressure from Smallwood, Gushue searched for a director of Extension, and wrote Canadian universities to gather information on other extension programs. He tried recruiting Newfoundland native and former co-operative worker Isaac Newell, who was then studying at Duke University, before hiring S. John Colman (M.A., Oxford) as director in 1959. Colman brought international experience to the university; English-born, he had worked as Director of Extramural Studies at the University of East Africa in Uganda. In his first year Colman travelled widely in Newfoundland and took two tours of extension services in Canada and the United States, the second of which was financed and organized by the Carnegie Corporation. Based on both his personal experiences and his consultations, he drafted a policy for Extension that the Board of Regents approved in May 1960. MUN Extension was to be designed for the province's unique needs for economic and social improvement and the cultural and academic opportunities.<sup>23</sup>

The Board endorsed Colman's view that Memorial had to employ representatives stationed outside the capital, agreeing that the university's extension representatives "will be sociologists with special training in community development . . . [whose] principal task [is] to help people assess needs in a scientific manner and to ascertain the best methods of meeting them."<sup>24</sup> Extension would also set up working committees on fisheries, agriculture, co-operatives, etc. to work with governments, employers, and labour groups to design programming. A producer of educational television and radio would be recruited to bring content to a wide audience. Colman had received the co-operation of the Premier and Minister of Education in implementing these plans, as well as a budget of \$30,000 from the province and the enthusiasm of the administration and faculty of Memorial.<sup>25</sup>

Colman emphasized that a successful service would have to be tailored to local conditions, and experimental. "There must be no hesitation in trying new projects, or in abandoning activities which have manifestly failed," he wrote;



“that there will be failures and setbacks is evident to anyone familiar with the problems of organizing extension activities anywhere, quite apart from the special difficulties which arise in Newfoundland.”<sup>26</sup> He advocated an emphasis on community development based on involving as many people as possible to generate an assessment of their needs. The key to success, he felt, was having community development specialists living in rural communities and thus in a position to encourage local volunteers to assume leadership positions: “to know intimately local people and their needs; to be accepted as a respected member of the local community rather than a suspected outsider . . . [can] provide a psychological foundation for extension workers which cannot be achieved if the university keeps itself and its faculty apart, in one place.”<sup>27</sup>

Colman also advocated offering a range of adult education courses, taught by specialists in home economics, labour relations, and business management, as well as academic subjects. Other instructors would nurture talent in music, painting, and drama. He envisioned a set of working committees at Memorial, in such areas as fisheries, agriculture, and social welfare, that would identify the needs of the community and co-ordinate the Extension activity with government development efforts. Special courses and conferences could then be designed, and educational television and radio could be effective. In a prophetic warning, he suggested that the Extension staff members be treated as equal to their academic colleagues or “strains [would] arise from the exaggerated sense of difference which is generated between the two categories of staff.”<sup>28</sup>

Colman believed that no extension system could be copied from another jurisdiction — they needed one suited to Newfoundland. The first step in his strategy, as he outlined it in 1960, was to send researchers to a couple of areas to study needs. That would be followed by a program to encourage skills, talent, leadership, and discussion among rural people. “Helping them to think” was the goal, he said, “not telling them what to think.”<sup>29</sup> Lastly, Extension would create working groups to tackle particular fields, such as fisheries development and welfare. However, the Board of Regents of the university did not share Colman’s view that all of the professional appointments to Extension should be as faculty members.<sup>30</sup> Besides Colman himself, Edna Baird (B.A., Dalhousie; B.H.Sc., McGill), who had been Memorial’s home economics instructor, joined him as a member both of the faculty and of the extension staff.<sup>31</sup>

Extension’s initial three fieldworkers were D.J. MacEachern, Vera Moore, and Julia Morgan. The sister of then Dean of Arts and Science, M.O. Morgan, Julia Morgan had worked with the adult education division of the government’s Department of Education before Confederation. In 1953, after completing a

B.A. and M.A. at the University of Wisconsin, she transferred to the Department of Public Welfare of the Newfoundland government. She and Moore, who also had a M.A. from Wisconsin, had been community development workers in the central Newfoundland community of Windsor. After earning a doctorate in 1960 at Wisconsin, Morgan was appointed to the Extension Service and went to Bonavista as fieldworker. Unfortunately, illness forced her to resign after a few months.<sup>32</sup> MacEachern was a Nova Scotian who had trained at St. Francis Xavier University, and was one of seven St. F.X. graduates who had worked as fieldworkers for the Commission of Government's division of co-operatives between 1936 and 1943. He had established "study clubs" on the island's west coast to encourage co-operation and had founded a co-op in the area. Returning to Newfoundland in 1961, he ran Memorial's Extension office in Corner Brook.<sup>33</sup>

Other fieldworkers were soon added — providing Memorial with eyes and ears in various areas of the province as well as individuals who were engaged in working with the communities in which they lived. Colman assigned the Lewisporte-based Fred Earle a large area and a broad mandate:

The purpose of your appointment is, by discussion with large and small groups, and by other methods of education, to help fishermen adopt to whatever modern methods (either of catching, processing or marketing) may be relevant to their local situation — to help them also by seeing that they are informed as fully as possible of the various governmental and other aids available to them, and that they express their local situation and needs as well as they can, and with as much knowledge as they can get, to the governments, if they wish to do so. The single ultimate purpose of all this is to help fishermen get as good a living as they can through efficient fisheries. . . . While your task is not necessarily concerned with encouraging the growth of efficient cooperative enterprises, the Provincial Government's Department of Cooperative Extension should be called upon for help wherever there is a chance of developing cooperative education. . . . For the most part you will take "community development" to mean "economic development" but as time goes on it is possible that you may be able to help fishing communities solve some of their social problems.<sup>34</sup>

With a core of full-time people of varied backgrounds, and a large workforce of people on short-term contracts, Extension was flexible and responsive to public needs. In addition to the fieldworkers, Extension soon employed

people to work in fostering the arts. By the academic year 1962–63 it had added specialist teachers in drama, painting (Christopher Pratt), and music (Ignatius Rumboldt). This was not the university's first effort in such areas; Reginald Sheppard and H.B. Goodridge had taught painting and art appreciation in the 1950s.<sup>35</sup> It hired Gerald Ottenheimer, a Newfoundland native with degrees from Fordham and Memorial, to be the producer of television and radio.<sup>36</sup>

Many of those who worked for Extension drifted into the work by chance; a few had relevant training, but most learned on the job and moved into positions of greater responsibility and creativity. Fieldworkers were hired for their ability to work with local people. Some had academic qualifications, while others had no post-secondary training, but their presence in communities meant that they could mediate between the experts in St. John's and people in their region. Most university extension services seconded fieldworkers to a particular government department or had them implement particular government programs; Memorial's fieldworkers were distinctive in that they lived in the rural communities and had no set programs to implement. Their job was to listen to people and identify problems and local leaders whom the Extension service could then engage in dialogue.<sup>37</sup> While the model of the university's academic wing was for an expert to impart knowledge to the student — the fieldworkers were in a position to ask their neighbours what knowledge they needed. They could organize a conference, bring in experts, or request the media unit to create a film. *Decks Awash*, which began as an Extension television show in 1961 and continued as a magazine between 1968 and 1991, could also devote an episode or an issue to a particular topic. When an initiative came from St. John's, the fieldworkers provided logistical support for conferences or research in their regions.

## THE SNOWDEN ERA

Colman, along with his co-workers, established many of the philosophical and organizational characteristics for which MUN Extension became known, before he left in 1965 for an appointment at the University of Toronto. His successor, Donald Snowden, became nearly synonymous with MUN Extension. The Manitoba-born Snowden had studied at the University of Manitoba and Carleton University before joining the federal government's Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources. In that capacity, he had helped organize craft production and co-operatives in the eastern Arctic. The Newfoundland

government hired Snowden to conduct a study of co-operatives in Newfoundland under the auspices of the federal government's Agriculture and Rural Development Act (ARDA), and Smallwood offered him a job implementing his recommendations. At the same time, Memorial University Vice-President Moses Morgan offered Snowden the job as director of Extension, an offer Snowden accepted since it would give him the freedom to operate without bureaucratic restrictions. His style soon permeated the whole service. As his long-time co-worker George Lee reported: "Snowden also brought an unstructured approach to Extension. . . . The fieldworkers' definition [under his leadership] was very loose and unstructured [as] . . . they weren't given a program to go out and sell, they were asked to go and live in a community and tell us what they thought would be the best programs for that community."<sup>38</sup> Under Snowden's leadership the number of people employed by Extension also increased, and he brought in people from outside the university. Lee, for example, had been principal of a high school in Labrador City between 1962 and 1967, and he and his wife, Jill, became aware of Extension when it supported the Carol Players theatrical group in the town. Snowden recruited Lee as head of the visual and performing arts division of Extension because Snowden saw in him someone who shared a common interest in cultural developments. Lee was soon able to support a range of cultural activities in the province, at a time when there was no provincial funding agency for the arts.<sup>39</sup>

It was not only his philosophy, and the foundation laid by Colman, that shaped Extension. Snowden knew his way around Ottawa, and the late 1960s was a period in which the federal government was "open to innovative programs that sought to eradicate poverty and bring disenfranchised groups into the mainstream." The NFB, as with some other departments, included "idealistic 'bureaucratic renegades'" working towards a more just society.<sup>40</sup> As one of these renegades, Snowden was able to get federal funding for many Newfoundland initiatives. Since it had its own source of funds (federal programs and philanthropic organizations), Extension did not always have to get budgetary approval from the university in advance. A project could go from idea to reality, and then be changed if it was not working, at a rate that would have been inconceivable in a more conventional organization. Having a budget of its own, without having to compete for funds with the academic units, also allowed Extension administrators to travel widely in the United States and Europe to learn what others were doing.<sup>41</sup>

Much of the innovation at Extension came from a desire to experiment. If someone within Extension had an idea for a film, a program, or a course, he or

she had the freedom to pursue it. If someone in a community asked for information on a particular problem, or if a fieldworker identified an issue that needed to be addressed, a film could be created or a conference organized. Everyone was gratified when the results were positive, but there were no negative consequences if the results were not what had been envisioned. Lee reflected that it was “impossible to fail” because any outcome could be chalked up to having tested a new method and learned from the experiment.<sup>42</sup> Experimentation was rewarded. That is not to say that everyone always agreed — staff members could be critical of each other’s pet projects. When the media unit produced a film, everyone in the unit would get together to screen it and discuss both the aesthetics and content of the work.<sup>43</sup> Ideological diversity among the members of Extension also led to debate within the group. Twice a year the whole of the Extension staff would gather for a week. As Lee reported, “some of the things that would go on in these sessions were pretty blunt and open . . . and [could include] stark criticism of a particular fieldworker’s approach, but everybody learned from it.”<sup>44</sup> Ideally the ongoing critical appraisal would prompt improvement, although some individuals must also have felt frustration and discouragement.

In keeping with the temper of the 1960s, Extension members developed roles as social activists and community organizers; it started with the premise that rural people had difficulty formulating goals and articulating them to government. While the nature of bureaucracies made it easy for government to generate top-down programs, few local organizations in Newfoundland were able to apply for money and in rural areas few individuals with the skills necessary to administer the programs. MUN Extension helped train community leaders, but this went beyond giving communities the skills to avail themselves of government programs to encourage local activism. In the 1960s few rural Newfoundlanders had experience attending conferences or serving on local boards; Extension pioneered the processes of getting people to articulate their views to those in positions of power.

The radicalism of the 1960s and 1970s was limited, however, and a couple of the women who had worked for Extension later reflected that while the men who ran Extension were sophisticated in their understanding of class, they were conservative, and sometimes hostile, in approaching issues of gender. Linda Cullum, who worked as part of the media unit, later argued that her male colleagues viewed men’s concerns as community concerns, and that Extension itself was patriarchal:

I looked in the organization and I thought, how can we make any change around inequality? Not just in gender relations but in broader social and class relations if we can't do it and see it around the organization. . . . How can we make social change outside when we can't make it inside? . . . So I felt like we were exporting to community groups, perhaps a very fine class analysis, and a political analysis, but very conventional gender norms.<sup>45</sup>

While some initiatives were tailored to what the men perceived as women's needs, the fieldworkers were nearly exclusively male. There was a husband and wife team, Margaret Davis and her husband, on the south coast of the island, and a second team, Larry and Laura Jackson, was later added in Forteau.

Born in Nova Scotia in 1940, Laura Jackson studied at Acadia and then journalism at Carleton University, where she met her husband. The two had a summer job with Information Canada, a department of the federal government, interviewing people in Labrador for a program called "reaching the unreachable."<sup>46</sup> Having heard Labradorians say good things about Tony Williamson, who had joined Extension in 1967 and was then the head of the field staff, the Jacksons visited St. John's in 1971 to meet him. Snowden met them, too, and he later hired Larry to work on the Royal Commission on Labrador. Larry fit in well with the Extension management, his wife reported: he was a good writer, and was good with people. He frequently used the phrase "there is wisdom in the people," she remembered, and he believed that if you got fishermen around the table, gave them all the facts, and said "we have to make a decision," they would do the right thing.

When the Royal Commission finished in 1974 Larry was sent to the Labrador Straits. Laura made the case to Snowden and Lee that they should hire her to work with women. When she applied, Margaret Davis told her, "I broke the ground for you, but be prepared for a rough ride 'cause they [the men who run Extension] don't like to hire women, they don't see the need. They see the traditional community, the traditional power structure, and they are not thinking outside that box."<sup>47</sup> Suspecting her request would be treated with skepticism, she had done a lot of research on the needs of the area. The women on the Straits were the farmers: they raised cattle, dairy cows, they made and sold milk and butter, and were working towards community gardens and a communal greenhouse that could have provided young plants to different communities instead of everyone starting from seeds. People also wanted information on nutrition, and while Extension had a nutritionist on staff in St. John's, Laura

argued that the Straits needed someone to co-ordinate the information. Women had also told her they wanted information on early childhood education, and aid with the quality control of their handicraft production. Her pitch was successful, and while Larry concentrated on the bread and butter of MUN Extension — the fishery — Laura worked with women in the area to set up daycare centres, showed NFB films about the problems of working women, set up a summer arts program, and co-ordinated workshops with the nutritionist.<sup>48</sup>

Extension's efforts to help people develop tools for self-help fit well with the philosophy of NFB Challenge for Change films. Both Low and Snowden were determined to do something about rural poverty after reading the 1965 Economic Council of Canada's *Report on Poverty in Canada*, and settled on Fogo as a place to experiment in the use of film to motivate community action.<sup>49</sup> As Low put it, the Fogo Island Project "used film as a catalyst to generate local debate — to give local people a voice and even editorial control — and to provide these people with access to people in power, via film."<sup>50</sup> While documentary filmmakers usually played the role of *author* in mediating the experience of the subjects of the film, the people of Fogo were given some power over shaping their representations (although Fred Earle mediated between the community and the filmmakers).<sup>51</sup> The Newfoundlanders who worked for Extension, and some of the Fogo Island residents themselves, learned both the technical skills and philosophy of activist filmmaking from Low, but as Newhook demonstrated, the Fogo Process was as much the result of work that the Extension fieldworkers were doing as an invention of filmmakers.<sup>52</sup>

Both the NFB and Extension learned from their interaction in Fogo. Harvey Best, of the Extension media unit, emphasized the change in working habits that evolved. In the early days, staff members focused on producing a finished film, but through working in Fogo with the crew from Montreal they became more relaxed and willing to sit on the wharf all day long talking, and then turn the camera on to see what they would capture.<sup>53</sup> Once the films were edited, the filmmakers showed them to people on Fogo Island as a way of raising an awareness of the commonalities each shared and breaking down municipal rivalries. A key innovation of the Fogo Process was the realization that creating a film about social problems for outsiders to see was of little use. The making of the film enabled people in the community to articulate their goals and problems. The members of the media unit also realized that it could show the films to government officials, film the response of the officials, and then show those films to people in rural Newfoundland.<sup>54</sup>

Even after there was no longer a direct connection, the NFB continued to

provide technical support to Memorial's filmmakers. The Film Board trained Newfoundlanders as filmmakers while they worked in Fogo, and in the spring of 1968 brought some to Montreal (to allow Extension to continue the work without tying up NFB personnel). The Board also provided the technical support for Extension to create its own media unit, which continued to develop the use of film as a technique for development.<sup>55</sup> The media unit further refined these interactive methods when it embarked on similar experiments in Port aux Choix. Over time, especially with the development of videotape, which was less expensive and easier to work with than film, Extension developed a significant catalogue of videos.

While rural economic development took much of its attention, Extension's role in St. John's was more often to support cultural activities. The number of full-time employees grew significantly during Snowden's tenure, and Extension employed hundreds of people on short-term, externally funded, contracts. Office space on campus was limited and the teaching faculty had first claim on that, so Extension moved off campus and into the community. Extension employees taught non-credit courses, particularly those in the arts, in a rented building on Bond Street in downtown St. John's. The artists, actors, and musicians teaching part-time, and others who had no affiliation with Extension but just showed up, had free run of the space for rehearsals and work space. Extension provided a building, along with some money and equipment, and let the artists develop what they would, rather than commission a particular kind of work. As Lee later reflected on Bond Street's role as an incubator for the broad-based cultural revival of the 1970s: "You can't put artists together without something happening, both on a human level and on an artistic level."<sup>56</sup> Similar autonomy from the academic role of the university developed at the media unit, which for much of its life was housed off campus.

From the vantage point of 2011, many former Extension workers reflected that there had been a golden age between about 1965 and 1975. As communities strained to modernize, many Newfoundlanders perceived a need for both improved communications and community empowerment. Economic and social changes challenged the authority of traditional elites such as the merchants, members of the provincial legislature, and the clergy. Extension workers saw time as ripe for grassroots democracy, economic empowerment, and secularization.<sup>57</sup> They not only taught skills but directed social change, and through film and their magazine they held up mirrors to rural society. Conferences also encouraged people to articulate their perceptions of the challenges faced by their community. Extension workers had faith in the latent potential of the



people to solve their own problems — if only, they believed, Extension could break down the barriers to communication. They were aware of international movements and self-reflective about their own leadership in community development; many believed that the state could ameliorate inequality, and that positive change from below was possible. Such beliefs animated the American Civil Rights movement, the women's movement, the war on poverty, and the "just society." Canadian government money for community initiatives could be accessed relatively easily, and government oversight was flexible. The federal government's Department of Communications under the leadership of Eric Kierans, for example, was willing to experiment, and Extension was able to access federal money.<sup>58</sup>

Despite widespread commitment to community organization and the emerging arts community, Extension was not populated exclusively by long-haired radicals. Both the fieldworkers and those who worked in St. John's were ideologically diverse. While some were suspicious of local merchants and clergy, others worked well with business. Earle, for example, had been at the centre of both the Fogo Process and the formation of the Fogo Co-op, but he had grown up in a merchant family and had a brother who was a prominent Anglican clergyman. He worked readily with local businesses and understood their needs, to the extent that a few of his colleagues criticized him as too close to business.<sup>59</sup> An account of fieldworkers as either an arm of the state or as organizing resistance to the state would be too simple. As the government resettled many rural communities, Earle was one of those who opposed the heavy-handed manner of its implementation. "I am afraid the type of work I am doing will become more difficult as time goes by," Earle wrote to sociologist Cato Wadel. "I think human beings should be treated with more respect than just use them as instruments to move because someone in power thinks it is alright to do so. I guess we must accept it. Or must we?"<sup>60</sup> Fieldworkers such as Earle could help communities resist government policies even as they were tasked with implementing them. As he wrote to Wadel on another occasion:

I am only inserting this paragraph as I think you, as a ~~socialist~~ sociologist, would appreciate it. Doubtless you have heard me express my sentiments toward fishermen from the North East Coast moving to the South Coast and taking part in the big fishing industry which our Government advocates. Of course, being in the field of education, I am supposed to supply the ideas of others and practically sit (in public) on my own ideas. During my recent film showing on Fogo Island I

slipped in a film on Dragger Fishing. I will admit I selected a film taken in a severe storm where the pot of soup left the stove, men were called in the middle of the night to secure things getting loose on deck, men darning their socks, etc. The comments following the showing were interesting; — “You will never get me to go to Marys-town” . . . “Darning socks, that’s my wife’s job” . . . “I rather eat home where the soup pot stays on the stove” . . . “You can keep your draggers” . . . “All right for them fellows up there, they are used to it.” I got my message across, Cato, without saying a word and I only used the materials supplied by the educators which showed the Government’s million dollar investments elsewhere.<sup>61</sup>

Autonomy from the bureaucracy, innovation, experimentation, and helping people identify their own needs — these were all qualities valued by the Extension members, and these were the qualities which, 20 years later, many of them believed had caused them to become estranged from government. During the 1970s the federal government contracted out economic and social development, though such programs as the Community Education program, which allowed Extension a measure of autonomy. Snowden and Lee still had to go to the university administration for overall budget approval, but many of its activities were generating revenue so it had a lot of discretion over spending. “Academic” priorities did not determine Extension’s agenda. By the 1980s, however, governments doubted activism could solve long-standing problems. Provincial civil servants, many of whom had been trained at Memorial, had moved into administering government programs. Politicians sometimes saw discontent in their districts not as products of legitimate popular concerns, but as having been created by rabble-rousers from the university. One former Extension worker related an incident in which a cabinet minister called her and threatened to have her fired; he felt that she had “stirred up” the people in his district. With political cover from Morgan and a budget not dependent on political approval, Extension workers could be confident they would not lose their jobs. Far from firing her, the reaction within Extension to this incident was “That’s how we know we are doing our job.”<sup>62</sup>

Lee, Best, and Macleod, in particular, emphasized with pride the differences between their approach and those of the provincial and federal bureaucracies. First, they reported, MUN Extension helped people articulate their own concerns, while government departments approached communities with programs and policies to implement. The common factor in most of the activities

of Extension, they pointed out, was listening to people before designing programs, and they noted that such a way of working was becoming difficult in the 1980s. The bureaucratic structures of government, and increasingly the university, required clear outcomes to be identified before work started. That did not allow for asking people about their needs, fortuitous accidents with unexpected outcomes, or changing the goals of a program in midstream. Second, while federal and provincial governments relied on the mass media to communicate their policy objectives, the university had its own professional television, magazine, and film unit. That included the most modern communications and media technologies. The media unit made short films, and later videos, almost on demand, giving Extension, at its peak, a role in setting the terms of the public debate. That each of these men went on to work in international development after their retirement from Memorial, and worked with national and international aid bureaucracies, reinforced in their minds the contrast between MUN Extension and government ways of working. As the optimism of the 1960s gave way to the fiscal retrenchment of the late 1970s, and as the nature of rural life changed, Extension lost momentum. On a day-to-day basis, Extension was autonomous of the academic divisions, while faculty members focussed on teaching academic subjects as well as research.<sup>63</sup> This dichotomy made Extension vulnerable when the university budget became restricted; the claim could be made that Extension was separate from the core functions of the university.

During the last years of his government, Smallwood drove many men of talent out of the Liberal Party, leaving an expertise vacuum that Extension was only too happy to exploit. Changes in the relationship with the province also marked a turning point for Extension, and for Snowden personally. Ottenheimer left his position with Extension when he was elected as a Progressive Conservative member of the House of Assembly in 1966, and the next year he became leader of the party. In 1972 the newly elected Progressive Conservative government of Frank Moores appointed Snowden as the chairman of the Royal Commission on Labrador.<sup>64</sup> With the election of Moores, however, men and women with administrative and financial management skills were hired within the civil service. Memorial, generally, and Extension, specifically, had trained new generations of civil servants who had the confidence and ability to design policies and programs. By the time Brian Peckford took office in 1979, several former members of Extension later reported, government no longer wanted any part of Memorial University to be interfering in policy. Memorial had filled the expertise vacuum during the 1960s, but the government bureaucracy moved into it during the 1970s. This provoked tensions at the margins, but for

the most part Extension's administrators were happy to oblige. Snowden and Lee believed that when community development councils, craft associations, and other community-based institutions were in place in rural areas, the Extension Service no longer needed to kindle community activism.

Moreover, Extension had proved better at offering the tools and the ideological commitment to empower discussion within communities than in providing ongoing administrative support. Fieldworkers could facilitate discussion, but they were unable to provide the accounting, legal, and technical expertise that sustaining local initiatives required. The university no longer had an expertise advantage in discussions of public affairs, and bureaucrats were more confident. As the sociologist Doug House reported, the Moores government wanted to distance itself from Smallwood by rejecting the centralization and resettlement programs, and by creating its own rural development program and its own fieldwork services under the department of Rural Agriculture and Northern Development. Ironically, as the provincial government rhetoric became more committed to rural development, competition emerged between the two sets of fieldworkers with different agendas. Government fieldworkers had programs to implement and were less integrated into communities than Extension workers, but they now had access to government money.<sup>65</sup>

Not long after Snowden's work on the Royal Commission ended, he found himself marginalized at the university. In 1974 Morgan amalgamated Extension with the Division of Summer Session and Extramural Studies, and appointed the faculty member who had previously led the latter, A.H. Roberts, as its head. Snowden became a "special advisor" to the unit he had once led.<sup>66</sup> Increasingly, his time became devoted to economic development projects in other countries (he seemed to be happier starting new initiatives than running established bureaucracies) and so he spent little time in Newfoundland. The changing needs and political landscape prompted Snowden and Lee, at a meeting in Hong Kong, to agree that Extension should wind down. "The whole philosophy of Extension related to the arts and culture was that the university should do it as long as nobody else was doing it," Lee put it, "but our role was to get it started, to get it going, and as soon as government departments or some other agencies, community colleges or whatever wanted to take it over [they could]."<sup>67</sup> Snowden left Memorial to work in international development, and died while working on a development project in India in 1984. His departure was followed a few years later by that of several other key people. Lee and McLeod, for example, also took the tools they had developed in Newfoundland and applied them in the developing world. By the 1980s, the processes

they had pioneered in Fogo and Port aux Choix seemed more relevant to India and Africa than they did in Newfoundland. Best left Extension in the late 1970s feeling a need for a change in his own life, as well as a sense that rural Newfoundland no longer needed what Extension was good at providing:

The Extension Service was very good at what I call the education stage, you go into a community and get people all excited and organized and they would take action one way or another. The Extension Service was never very good at what I call the implementation stage. Maybe it shouldn't be involved in that stage, but I felt we needed the accountants once you got to a certain stage of development and you needed lawyers and these things were not readily available within the communities at that time and the university didn't provide it and couldn't provide it. So I often felt we were leaving people out to dry.<sup>68</sup>

## THE DECLINE

By the 1980s, many of the key people sensed that the heyday of Extension was over, and indeed that they had achieved much. The university's administration also encouraged Extension to deliver courses and issue certificates. Lee and Best felt out of step in an age when people wanted certificates as proof of vocational training. Extension workers could no longer get away with the sort of behaviour that had made their work so exciting during the 1960s. While they had used their media savvy and funds to be provocative, they believed that their reputation for being saucy made them few friends in the long run.<sup>69</sup>

At Extension, Snowden was replaced by Elayne Harris (unrelated to Leslie Harris), a woman who had once served as Snowden's assistant and who had taken on greater and greater responsibilities. She reoriented Extension to make the distinct units work more effectively together to implement what she later called "macro themes." The parts of the service co-operated more by accident than design, and Harris wrote a strong piece critical of the status quo. Having been frustrated with how "certain directors had made the department in their own personal image and the personality of the individual was not as important as uniting the strength of the staff," she had left for graduate school in adult education. Not everyone, she later reported, felt the same way as she did, some wanted a director who was "a visionary and a strong individual."<sup>70</sup>

A crisis of confidence had set in. Rural Newfoundland was no longer the society it had been during the Smallwood years, and so the mandate and methods of Extension needed to be updated. Municipal government and better communications had made it possible for communities to advocate for themselves without the aid of Extension. House perceived that during the 1980s university administrators had no desire to abolish Extension, but that there was broad agreement that Extension's mode of working was obsolete.<sup>71</sup> Meanwhile, when Leslie Harris, then President of the university, met with the provincial government's cabinet committee on the university budget, he found himself justifying the activities of Extension to a disproportionate degree.<sup>72</sup> While external conditions were shifting, Extension was being dismembered from inside as well. Cullum had valued working within the flat organizational structure of MUN Extension in which people were free to take on new roles, but when much of the media unit was transferred to a new division of Educational Television (ETV) she objected to the hierarchical and "patriarchal" workplace in which she now found herself. She moved to the conference division of Extension so she could continue to work with women's groups, and ultimately returned to university for a Ph.D. and a faculty position.<sup>73</sup> The staff at ETV worked regular hours and expected overtime pay when filming during the evenings, while the media unit had been accustomed to working in the evenings, since that was when community members were available. Not surprisingly, resentments grew when some people were expected to do things for which their counterparts in St. John's were paid extra. ETV employees, Elayne Harris recalled, lacked the sense of mission that their media unit counterparts had shared, and Extension was now frustrated by having to book the videographers' time weeks ahead of needing them rather than enjoying the flexibility of the former media unit.<sup>74</sup>

As budget cuts eliminated positions, the organizational structure was no longer suitable. Administrators floundered in their efforts to renew a relevant mandate for Extension in keeping with new conditions, and the staff became demoralized and faction-riven. A series of self-studies and consultant reports were astute in identifying the malaise, but short on supplying a vision of the future for the institution that had the support of the academic administrators:

One side effect of a structure that had several sections which were relatively discrete as to the function performed was the development of a specialization in staff roles so that the nine field officers could concentrate exclusively on community development in the field while

program developers could be totally absorbed in catering to personal and professional development needs and so on. Inevitably, as a result of limited contact with each, and less reason to have a personal stake in the activities of other highly specialized sections of the department, solitudes grew with sections, members holding stereotypic views of members of other sections and dysfunctional assumptions about which section performed the most valued work of the department. Language, mandates, rewards, values, habits, philosophies and perceived status differed from section to section and caused joint efforts to be slow, faltering, and unsatisfactory in outcome, both for individuals and for the institution.<sup>75</sup>

Each of the reports presented on Extension — in 1975, 1976, 1979, 1981, 1982, and 1986 — had “confirmed and vigorously lauded the work of Extension as a very essential element in the development of the province and a most appropriate function for this, the only university in the province.”<sup>76</sup> Yet, as Extension downsized its fieldwork staff and rural communities became self-sufficient, it lost its influence among rural Newfoundlanders. House, who had chaired a Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment in 1986, considered volunteering to direct Extension. He felt it would have given him an opportunity to work on issues the Commission had identified, but in 1987 then Vice-President Academic, David Strong, told House that to resolve the question of leadership of Extension he was going to combine it with the division of Part Time and Continuing Studies. It proved to be an uncomfortable union, since the various parts worked to different mandates and administrators still felt that Extension was working “under the old model.”<sup>77</sup>

As Graham Skanes, a psychologist who was appointed director, focused greater attention on the traditional university role of providing courses, Memorial's professional schools wanted control over the curriculum and the newly formed Division of Continuing Education became an avenue through which faculty could offer courses. The imminent creation of community colleges also prompted Elayne Harris to prepare a report: “Anticipatory Planning for the Extension Service during current period of transition and change.” The public and private institutions were moving into non-credit programming. Now that Memorial no longer had a monopoly in such areas, the costs to the university of providing such programming had increased. She felt that offering courses in leisure activities “is not integral to the development focus that has been and should remain the core of Extension.”<sup>78</sup> The new School of

Continuing Education took over certificate courses, business programming had been taken over by the Faculty of Business and Administration and Commerce, and the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science had taken over continuing education related to engineering. Harris believed that this presented an opportunity to take a leadership role in education in rural areas without duplicating the activities of the college system. "Extension cannot appear to stand still or wait any longer," she commented; "to do so would be to kill staff motivation and initiative and relinquish the twenty-six-year battle the University has had to keep the right to provide Newfoundlanders a politically free environment to develop their skills as citizens."<sup>79</sup>

Despite the efforts to revitalize Extension, in 1991 a fiscal crisis prompted the recently appointed President of Memorial, Arthur May, to close it. Federal cutbacks in transfer payments to the provinces and years of the province running a deficit resulted in a lower grant to Memorial. Enrolment was increasing rapidly in that decade, making it nearly impossible to cut faculty members, so draconian measures became necessary. Maintenance of buildings was deferred, the university suspended contributing to the employees' pension plan, entrance requirements were raised to reduce the number of students admitted, and tuition and other fees were raised. May had a little familiarity with Extension; as a long-time federal Fisheries scientist and bureaucrat he had heard about the Fogo Process and received *Decks Awash* magazine, but he claimed he did not know what Extension was then doing for the fishery. In his first few months as president, senior administrators advised May on areas to cut in the budget, and, he remembered, the Extension Service kept coming to the table. "If Extension is a weak part of the structure why hasn't something been done about it before now," May asked, "and the answer, as I recall, was everyone was afraid to touch it, because it had become politicized."<sup>80</sup>

We had people who had become expert at social activism, in other words, you want a protest we'll deliver you a protest, kind of thing. Some people might interpret that as being due to the fact that Extension was thought to be so important in the communities in which it existed that the communities would fight tooth and nail to preserve them but it wasn't that at all. As I discovered subsequently, it wasn't that at all. . . . [After closing it] we got virtually nothing in the way of protest from the communities; we got a huge protest from the arts community . . . in St. John's.<sup>81</sup>



May was not timid; the Department of Fisheries and Oceans often coped with unruly protests. The relationship between the President and those in Extension was perhaps likely to turn unpleasant. Skanes reported that when May introduced himself to the Extension division, some of them expressed a “radical” attitude towards authority and especially towards the government. May, Skanes remembered, responded to one employee: “these are dangerous thoughts you are expressing.”<sup>82</sup> May believed that few rural Newfoundlanders then thought Extension relevant, an opinion confirmed in his mind by the people whose views he solicited. He reported that he asked Richard Cashin of the Fishermen’s Food and Allied Workers Union what his members thought about Extension, and was told they saw it as “a joke.” “I was completely surprised and taken aback,” May commented, “but it solidified the conclusion that was being brought to me from other sources, that Extension had outlived its usefulness and had become something that was not particularly useful or relevant at the time.”<sup>83</sup> The university’s Board of Regents, which had representatives from various parts of the province, approved of May’s austerity budget without objecting to Extension being cut. He also reported that he did not consult outside the university “because it was evident from the start the furor that would result, organized from within [Extension] by the way, not from without.”<sup>84</sup>

It fell to the acting director of Extension, Dave Curran, to make the case that MUN Extension represented only 0.84 per cent of Memorial’s budget and that “if we accept that it is part of this university’s mission to be relevant to the society and culture of which it is part, then it follows that its Extension Services ought to be an essential part of the university’s operation.”<sup>85</sup> Curran’s appeal failed. Skanes thought the philosophy of Extension had been consistent with university policy in Morgan’s and Snowden’s time, but was so no longer. He thought that both the senior administrators at Memorial and the provincial government now saw Extension as a source of embarrassment. His view was that Memorial should indeed bring faculty expertise to bear on community problems, but that Extension was too antithetical to authority to move effectively in such directions.<sup>86</sup> May remembered few people outside of Memorial speaking up for Extension when the university announced that the Extension Service would be disbanded.<sup>87</sup>

Meetings were held, and people may have used the “open-line” radio shows to express their views, but no evidence of those activities are extant. A survey of the *Evening Telegram* reveals a robust reaction on the part of Extension employees, artists, community-based non-governmental organizations, and people involved in adult education. Tom O’Keefe, a 20-year veteran of Extension, implied that Memorial’s administration was not being forthright. “We all need to know,”

he wrote, "that Extension is not being eliminated because of tight budgets but that situation is being used to do what many people in power have been trying to do for years."<sup>88</sup> The suspicion that people in power had a hidden agenda to shut down Extension was widely shared among Extension supporters. The quickly organized "Friends of MUN Extension" included people from the arts community and from the university, and it organized a sit-in of May's office, a petition, and other protests. At one meeting, at which the newspaper estimated 350 people had gathered, Wilfred Bartlett, the chairman of the Green Bay South Regional Fishermen's Committee, became emotional as he told the crowd that the existence of a marine service centre in his area was a direct result of Extension workers who had taught basic skills of lobbying and organization.<sup>89</sup> Many workers in adult education in other provinces (Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia) also wrote to express their support for Extension, as did the Canadian Association of University Teachers and anti-poverty groups such as Oxfam. The number of fieldworkers had declined to the point that the university had no visible presence in many parts of Newfoundland, but in Gander and in Placentia local groups protested the closure of Extension offices in their towns. The constituency that spoke out most forcefully against the closure of Extension was the St. John's arts community, since many artists had ongoing ties to Extension. May perceived the lack of rural support for Extension and the emotional reaction among St. John's artists as vindication of his views that it had become irrelevant to rural people and that it was then little more than a group of social activists.<sup>90</sup> For many people it was a difficult time. Twenty years later, Skanes, who had the unpleasant duty of laying off a room full of people, found it emotionally difficult to relive during the interview.<sup>91</sup>

From the vantage point of 2010–11, the former Extension workers viewed the 1960s and 1970s as a creative and important phase of their lives, and remembered their optimism that social change was possible through giving power to the people. But long before Extension was shut down, many of the key people, most notably Snowden, had left the university. While many of those who worked in the unit, or those who saw themselves as friends of Extension, felt that a hostile administration settled scores by closing the unit, not everyone felt that way. Several of those who were interviewed expressed the view that by the 1980s they had already achieved their goals in rural Newfoundland. As George Lee reflected:

The role of Extension was never to become an established institution that would last forever. The role of Extension, which very few people

understand, was to start things and pass them over to other people when they were ready to take them. So basically, our role was to work ourselves out of a job.<sup>92</sup>

Working with international bureaucracies after leaving MUN Extension also encouraged nostalgia for the autonomy they once had. Many of Lee's peers remembered the government and university bureaucrats as offended by their "saucy" manner, but evidence suggests a relationship between government and Extension of greater variability and complexity. Edward Roberts, who had been a Smallwood confidant, a member of the cabinet, and later a member of the Board of Regents of the university, was in a position to gauge sentiment among decision-makers such as Smallwood and May. Roberts reported that Smallwood had been a great admirer of Coaker, knew of the Antigonish Movement, and favoured the role Extension played in outreach to rural areas. Furthermore, younger men in government in the late 1960s, such as himself, were aware of the work of the Peace Corps in the United States and the Company of Young Canadians, and they saw Extension as a positive force in the province.<sup>93</sup> Premier Moores appointed Snowden to chair the Royal Commission on Labrador, hardly a move one would expect if he disapproved of Extension. Furthermore, the urgent and daily pressures on government, the large-scale economic development projects, and partisan politics meant that the government paid little attention to what Extension fieldworkers were doing in outposts. The political and business communities in St. John's had their own priorities and preoccupations, while much of what Extension was doing happened in isolated communities and was thus of low visibility. There was little hostility towards Extension's work, despite the fact that many people who worked for Extension felt that they were rebels. But in the last years of the Smallwood government, Roberts remembered, "it was becoming a burr under the saddle of the body politic, which was what it was supposed to be doing."<sup>94</sup> He, too, thought that MUN Extension had outlived its role:

Extension was a hugely important instrument for a very brief time . . . what was it, about five years at its peak? It wasn't killed by the university, it seemed to die of its own volition, I don't know why. . . . Art May was putting the *coup de grâce* to it. I think Art figured it wasn't serving any purpose at all, and he was faced with huge cutbacks . . . and it was least value for the bucks. But I think it had run out long before then.<sup>95</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The needs of rural Newfoundland communities had indeed changed between the 1950s and the 1980s. When they were young and committed to democratic change, people at MUN Extension found working for the organization inspiring, although some of the older hands may have found the iconoclastic spirit discomfiting at times.<sup>96</sup> Many of those who were employed when the university shut the doors of Extension felt betrayed. Others, particularly those who had left the scene earlier, looked back with mixed emotions because they now saw the end of Extension both as a loss and as a sign that they had succeeded in their goals.

We must bear a couple of things in mind when juxtaposing the written record with oral testimony. Many of the former Extension employees have read what has been written about them, so their memories are shaped by contemporary analyses. They reflected on their social role, and, in the case of the three principal informants (George Lee, Paul MacLeod, and Harvey Best), they came with a story to tell. Their suspicion that the university had effaced the record of their accomplishments both reflected and shaped their suspicion of the bureaucracies. Their subsequent frustrations when working with international development agencies affected what they chose to emphasize about their work with the less bureaucratic Extension Service, as did their disappointment that the university had dismembered the unit they had put so much of themselves into creating.

Originating in the desire to make rural people self-reliant, MUN Extension had both local and international precedents. During Colman's tenure, it exemplified a faith in the role of the expert to impart the skills and knowledge to help rural people become modern, and it established some of the methods of grassroots activism for which it was later celebrated. Under Snowden's leadership, Extension fully developed its role of community activist and cultural provocateur. His charisma and accomplishments allowed Extension to carve out a prestigious role for itself. Extension pioneered the use of technology for interactive democratic communication, prompted communities to articulate their needs, and then developed programs to meet those needs. Long before the development of social networking on the Internet made interactive engagement easy, Extension used live conferences, video conferences, and the "Fogo Process" films to encourage communities to articulate solutions to their own problems and communicate with others. But during the 1980s the university emphasized a more traditional distance education division in which academic content was delivered through courses.<sup>97</sup>

When reflecting on their careers, many former Extension workers emphasized that they listened to people without having to implement a particular program, and then gave rural people the aid they asked for. The non-bureaucratic ethos and relative autonomy that permeated Extension also allowed it greater flexibility to experiment than government agencies or academic departments enjoyed. The ability to experiment with new technologies, to take risks in designing programs, and to create content with, rather than for, people living in target communities were all keys to the celebrated successes of MUN Extension. The prestige that accompanied interactive technologies and the cultural knowledge of rural people that came from fieldworkers were keys to the Extension unit establishing its position within the university and province. When the symbolic capital of technological expertise and knowledge of rural areas was no longer valued within the state or the university, competing demands for resources on the part of other divisions won and MUN Extension was closed.

## NOTES

- 1 Richard Gwyn, *Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1972), 305.
- 2 The former Minister of Education, Fred Rowe, mistakenly reported that Snowden was appointed Director of Extension in 1959 rather than 1965, forgetting the first director, S.J. Colman. Frederick W. Rowe, *Education and Culture in Newfoundland* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976), 98. Gwyn summed up the prevailing opinion of the Fogo Process when he wrote: "The approach was the product of two remarkable individuals. Colin Low . . . conceived the imaginative use of the new technology. The development philosophy was that of Donald Snowden." Gwyn, *Smallwood*, 311.
- 3 This essay benefits from Steinmetz's ideas about competition among elites in the colonial field. See George Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwestern Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
- 4 Susan Newhook, "Six Degrees of Film, Social, and Cultural History: The Fogo Island Film Project of 1967 and the 'Newfoundland Renaissance,'" *Acadiensis* 49, 2 (Summer/Autumn 2010): 48–69; Mekaela Gulliver, "Preserving the Best: The Newfoundland Cultural Movement, 1963–1984," Ph.D. dissertation, Memorial University, 2014.
- 5 Malcolm Macleod wrote a history of Memorial University College, and Melvin Baker has published on several aspects of the history of the university, but little has been written about the university's role in the province. See Malcolm Macleod, *A Bridge Built Halfway: A History of Memorial University College, 1925–1950* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990); Melvin Baker, "The Establishment

- of Memorial's Institute of Social and Economic Research in 1961," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 92, 3 (Winter 1999): 21–25.
- 6 The oral interviews for this research were funded by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the Harris Centre of Memorial University. Their support is gratefully acknowledged.
  - 7 Terry Bishop-Stirling, David Close, and Jeff A. Webb, "'Our Job Was to Make Ourselves Obsolete': MUN Extension and Community Engagement," unpublished report, Harris Centre, Memorial University, 2012. See also Terry Bishop-Stirling and Jeff A. Webb, "Pioneers in Community Engagement: MUN Extension, 1959–1991," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 104, 4 (Spring 2012): 45–47.
  - 8 Leona M. English, "Teaching the 'Morally and Economically Destitute': 19th Century Adult Education Efforts in Newfoundland," *Acadiensis* 41, 2 (Summer/Autumn 2012): 66–88.
  - 9 Leona M. English, "Adult Education on the Newfoundland Coast: Adventure and Opportunity for Women in the 1930s and 1940s," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 26, 1 (2011): 25–54.
  - 10 James Overton, "Moral Education of the Poor: Adult Education and Land Settlement Schemes in Newfoundland in the 1930s," *Newfoundland Studies* 11, 2 (1995): 250–82.
  - 11 Katherine A. McManus, "Florence O'Neill, a Newfoundland Adult Educator: Alone in the Wilderness," Ph.D. thesis (University of British Columbia, 2000), 142–46.
  - 12 Ronald Rompkey, *Grenfell of Labrador: A Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 89–90.
  - 13 William J. Browne *Eighty-four years a Newfoundlander* (St. John's: Dicks and Co., 1981), 233–42. See also Margaret Digby, *Report on the Opportunities for Cooperative Organization in Newfoundland and Labrador* (London, 1934). On the Antigonish Movement, see Jacob Remes, "In Search of 'Saner Minds': Bishop James Morrison and the Origins of the Antigonish Movement," *Acadiensis* 39, 1 (Winter/Spring 2010): 58–82.
  - 14 Jeff A. Webb, *The Voice of Newfoundland: A Social History of the Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland, 1939–1949* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 58–68.
  - 15 J.R. Smallwood, "What Is Liberalism? A Restatement of Its Aims, Objects and Ideals," edited and introduced by Melvin Baker and James Overton, *Newfoundland Studies* 11, 1 (Spring 1995): 75–126.
  - 16 Gwyn, *Smallwood*, 130–31.
  - 17 McManus, "Florence O'Neill," 182, 194.
  - 18 Raymond W. Miller, "Preliminary Report on Extension," 30 Jan. 1953, 8, Box 3, Extension Service Records, Archives and Special Collections (ASC), QEII Library, Memorial University.
  - 19 *Ibid.*, 9.
  - 20 Robert W. Miller, "Recommendation on Radio, Television and Film Use," 30 Jan. 1953, Box 3, Extension Service Records, ASC.
  - 21 Gwyn, *Smallwood*, 309.
  - 22 Kenneth Brian Johnston, "Government and University: The Transition of Memorial

- University of Newfoundland from a College to a University,” Ph.D. dissertation (University of Toronto, 1990), 228, 241–47.
- 23 S.J. Colman, “Memorial University of Newfoundland Extension Service,” 27 July 1960, 10.03.002, Alain Frecker Papers, ASC.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 S.J. Colman “Memorial University of Newfoundland Extension Service,” 3 May 1960, copy sent to Joseph Smallwood by Colman, 9 May 1960, 3.09.035, Smallwood Papers, ASC.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 “University’s Extension Program Being Arranged,” *Evening Telegram*, 4 Aug. 1960, 4.
- 30 Johnston, “Government and University,” 259.
- 31 Baird was a Newfoundland native and a member of the first class of Memorial University College in 1925. After completing a B.A. at Dalhousie in Halifax and a Bachelor of Household Science at McGill University in Montreal she did post-graduate work in nutrition and dietetics at Johns Hopkins University Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. She taught at Memorial University and part-time at the Grace Hospital Nursing School in St. John’s before joining Extension in 1959. *MUN Gazette*, 9 Oct. 1970.
- 32 Biographic note, Julia Morgan Papers, Coll. 211, ASC.
- 33 “MUN Extension Man to Visit West Coast,” *Evening Telegram*, 20 June 1961, 2.
- 34 S.J. Colman to Fred Earle, 10 Jan. 1964, 2.01.027, Fred Earle Papers, ASC.
- 35 Paul Winter to A.G. Hatcher, 26 Sept. 1951, File: Board of Regents 1951 — Secretary, Box PO — 3, President’s Office Files, Memorial University.
- 36 *MUN Calendar 1961–1962*, 33; *MUN Calendar 1962–1963*, 261.
- 37 George Lee interview, 20 Sept. 2010.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Peter K. Wiesner, “Media for the People: The Canadian Experiments with Film and Video in Community Development (1992),” in Thomas Waugh, Michael Brendan Baker, and Ezra Winton, eds., *Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary at the National Film Board of Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 75.
- 41 George Lee interview, 20 Sept. 2010.
- 42 Similarly, the filmmaker Paul McLeod commented that the only way to guarantee that one never failed was to not attempt anything. Paul McLeod interview, 3 Sept. 2010.
- 43 Linda Cullum interview, 17 Sept. 2010.
- 44 George Lee interview, 20 Sept. 2010.
- 45 Linda Cullum interview, 17 Sept. 2010.
- 46 Laura Jackson interview, 8 July 2011.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid. See also “Extension Fieldworkers in Labrador,” *MUN Gazette*, 18 Apr. 1975.
- 49 Stephen Crocker, “Filmmaking and the Politics of Remoteness: The Genesis of the Fogo

- Process on Fogo Island, Newfoundland," *Shima: The International Journal of Research into Island Cultures* 2, 1 (2008): 65.
- 50 Colin Low, "Grierson and Challenge for Change (1984)," in Waugh, Baker, and Winton, eds., *Challenge for Change*, 17.
- 51 Crocker, "Filmmaking and the Politics of Remoteness," 65.
- 52 Susan Newhook "The Godfathers of Fogo: Donald Snowden, Fred Earle and the Roots of the Fogo Island Films, 1964–1967," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 24, 2 (Fall 2009): 171–98. The popular memory of Extension's role in Fogo, for example, was that it helped empower people to resist the government's plan to resettle their community by creating a co-operative. As Newhook has shown, there was no real effort to resettle the communities in Fogo Island. Furthermore, Extension often worked hand in glove with government in encouraging modernization, and the province provided significant financial support to the Fogo Fishermen's Co-operative. To present Fogo as an example of Extension helping people resist Smallwood's modernization agenda is to misrepresent a more complex story.
- 53 Harvey Best interview, 24 Aug. 2010.
- 54 Paul McLeod interview, 3 Sept. 2010.
- 55 Randy Coffin interview, 8 Dec. 2010.
- 56 George Lee interview, 20 Sept. 2010.
- 57 Paul McLeod interview, 3 Sept. 2010.
- 58 George Lee interview, 20 Sept. 2010.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Fred Earle to Cato Wadel, 27 Sept. 1969, 2.01.155, Fred Earle Papers, ASC.
- 61 Fred Earle to Cato Wadel, 29 Feb. 1968, 2.01.155, Fred Earle Papers, ASC.
- 62 Helen Woodrow interview, 18 Oct. 2010.
- 63 The mandates of Extension and the Institute of Social and Economic Research were parallel; Extension identified problems and aided people in acquiring knowledge, while ISER acquired social and economic data on those problems. Institutionally, the two branches overlapped as well. The director of Extension sat on the governing board of ISER, Extension fieldworkers acted as aids and mediators with rural communities for ISER researchers, and conferences organized by Extension involved faculty.
- 64 "Snowden Appointed Head of Royal Commission on Labrador," *MUN Gazette*, 13 Oct. 1972.
- 65 Doug House interview, 18 Jan. 2011.
- 66 "Amalgamation of MUN Extension with Division of Summer Session and Extramural Studies," *MUN Gazette*, 18 Sept. 1974.
- 67 George Lee interview, 20 Sept. 2010.
- 68 Harvey Best interview, 24 Aug. 2010.
- 69 Best, Lee, MacLeod interviews. "Saucy" is a Newfoundland English word for "skittish, belligerent, unpredictable, dangerous." G.M. Story, W.J. Kirwin, and J.D.A. Widdowson, *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 436.



- 70 Elayne Harris interview, 28 Jan. 2011.
- 71 Doug House interview, 18 Jan. 2011.
- 72 Elayne Harris interview, 28 Jan. 2011.
- 73 Linda Cullum interview, 17 Sept. 2010.
- 74 Elayne Harris interview, 28 Jan. 2011.
- 75 Elayne Harris, "Anticipatory Planning for the Extension Service during Current Period of Transition and Change," Aug. 1986, Extension Series 2, Box 26, ASC, 10–11.
- 76 Dave Curran, "A Brief to the President from the Division of Extension Service, Memorial University of Newfoundland," 27 Feb. 1991, Extension Papers, Box 27, Series 2.
- 77 Doug House interview, 18 Jan. 2011.
- 78 Harris, "Anticipatory Planning," 9.
- 79 Elayne Harris, "Organizational Purpose during Transition: Extension Service," 29 Aug. 1986, Extension Series 2, Box 26, ASC, 8.
- 80 Art May interview, 7 Jan. 2011.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 Graham Skanes interview, 18 Mar. 2011.
- 83 Art May interview, 7 Jan. 2011.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 Curran, "A Brief to the President from the Division of Extension Service."
- 86 Graham Skanes interview, 18 Mar. 2011.
- 87 Art May interview, 7 Jan. 2011.
- 88 Tom O'Keefe, "MUN Professor Misses the Point," *Evening Telegram*, 18 Apr. 1991, 11.
- 89 "Friends of MUN Extension Put Warren on the Hot Seat," *Evening Telegram*, 31 Apr. 1991, 16.
- 90 Art May interview, 7 Jan. 2011.
- 91 Graham Skanes interview, 18 Mar. 2011.
- 92 George Lee interview, 20 Sept. 2010.
- 93 Edward Roberts interview, 15 Aug. 2011.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 Ibid.
- 96 Sally LeMessurier, who was a little older than many of the others, had been used to a workplace in which everyone referred to each other as Mr. or Miss, and had difficulty adjusting to an organization where everyone called each other by their first names. Sally LeMessurier interview, 5 Nov. 2010.
- 97 A study of the Antigonish Movement suggested that post-war improvements in transportation and communication created competition for the attention of rural people, who no longer read the pamphlets and attended the study groups. Meanwhile, St. Francis Xavier University expanded its academic departments at the expense of focusing on outreach. In the 1960s its extension unit moved away from community development. Reliance on government funding for development projects also caused the unit to lose its intellectual independence. The estrangement of the educational role from the co-operative movement led the university's extension service to decline, a trend encouraged

as the Roman Catholic clergy were replaced by secular and academically trained faculty who lacked commitment to the local place. Between the 1970s and 2000, St. F.X. tried without success to reinvent extension. See Santo Dodaro and Leonard Pluta, *The Big Picture: the Antigonish Movement of eastern Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 160–65, 205–06, 211.