

# The Godfathers of Fogo: Donald Snowden, Fred Earle and the Roots of the Fogo Island Films, 1964-1967

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# The Godfathers of Fogo: Donald Snowden, Fred Earle and the Roots of the Fogo Island Films, 1964-1967

SUSAN NEWHOOK

In 1965, and in the years which follow, the rural Newfoundlander faces an environment in which he will have growing mobility, greater purchasing power, greater educational opportunities, and a growing involvement by governments in the way he makes his living, retains his health, and takes his leisure. He faces a world in which his traditional techniques for earning a living are almost totally obsolete...He is being confronted with technical change and the transformation of social patterns at a rate unparalleled in Newfoundland history. He must be given opportunities for education, in its broadest scope... (but) no matter how obvious the trend toward centralization and population concentrations, the character, tradition and interests of the Newfoundlander and the dictates of the economic both militate against a total urban population in this Province.<sup>1</sup>

IT IS SUMMER ON a rocky ocean coast. Waves crash on an empty sweep of shoreline. We hear a soprano voice — unaccompanied and wordless, as if floating on the breeze — drift gradually into the folk song, “She’s Like the Swallow.” The camera pans to find whitewashed and weather-beaten saltbox houses, fishing stages and stores. A woman, her back to the camera, pins laundry to a clothesline as it billows in the wind. Then the scene shifts to a quiet harbour: small boats bob at their moorings and we see more houses and clotheslines, all much like the first one. Two small boys play in a field, supervised only by dandelions and the upended, rusting carcass of an old car. Slowly, the singing fades away, and the scene changes again to follow a well-used station wagon bumping and clattering its way along the hills and curves of a rough dirt road. It is 1967 in outport Newfoundland and pavement is still the exception. The community worker is heading into town. As the car squeaks and

clunks along in a cloud of dust, a male narrator begins to explain the more abstract journey ahead. “‘Challenge for Change’ is an experiment in the role of communications in social change,” he intones. “As part of this experiment we filmed local people, talking about the problems of a changing community, and played back these films in that community.”<sup>2</sup>

So begins *An Introduction to Fogo Island*, the overview chapter of a 1967-68 film and community development project undertaken jointly by the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) and Memorial University of Newfoundland’s Extension Service (MUN Extension).<sup>3</sup> The NFB film crew shot 27 short films over the course of a few months, as local people discussed and eventually established a fisheries and boatbuilding co-op.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the films were known as an important part of the Fogo Experiment, in which MUN Extension employees worked with the Fogo Islanders to reach a consensus on their future. In community and international development circles, the films are remembered as part of the first attempt at what became the Fogo Process, in which film (and later, video) became a player in group discussions of community development.<sup>4</sup>

The National Film Board called the films *The Newfoundland Project*, one of the first in the long-lived national Challenge for Change program, which aimed to use film as an agent of social change in the contemporary ‘war on poverty.’ In Canadian film studies, the Fogo island film project is remembered as the brainchild of the Montreal-based NFB director Colin Low. This article will show that the films’ provenance is more complex than either of these descriptions suggests. The impetus to create a fisheries co-operative on Fogo Island and the film project which chronicled its establishment both began in Newfoundland. Low and the director of MUN Extension, Donald Snowden, share credit for the Fogo Process, but each has been largely ignored by writers more interested in the work of the other. The myths and legends of the Fogo Island project reach beyond the question of whose idea it was. Contrary to many accounts, some of the most innovative elements of what would become the Fogo Process were not part of a careful plan, but were responses to circumstances which arose during the production and post-production processes; both production partners were familiar and comfortable with adjusting their approaches as events required. It is also untrue that the film project ‘saved’ Fogo Island from a provincial government plan to resettle its ten communities, though there were persistent local rumours that such a plan existed.

In clarifying inaccuracies of other accounts, I do not attempt to minimize the remarkable work of the people involved, except to say that the truth is more than good enough; forty years on, this unwieldy, yet often eloquent collection of films is a rich and important archive, deserving of more detailed attention from historians than it has received to date in both Newfoundland and Labrador, and in the rest of Canada. I want to emphasize that the project was not generated by people from “away” who arrived in a community which had lost all hope, as has often been sug-

gested. The project is not only about the National Film Board doing good by using film well. The Newfoundlanders involved were not the passive recipients of an intellectual transfer payment from Montreal; rather, the NFB was recruited to participate in a project which had already begun, and it contributed its considerable talents toward the success of that project. The results worked to the benefit of all concerned: MUN Extension, the NFB and the people of Fogo Island.

Reframing the story in this way shows its importance to the history of post-Confederation society and culture in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Fogo Island Experiment was not a one-off exercise, but part of an independent counterpoint to the government's centralization and industrialization strategies. Not political in the party sense, often staying intentionally out of public view, locally-based development workers hoped to convince people in small communities that they could survive by taking charge of their futures. This concept ran contrary to contemporary government policy and to generations of passive acceptance of decisions from St. John's, London or Ottawa. If "definitions belong to the definers, not to the defined,"<sup>5</sup> the element of agency in this story goes some way to removing the influence of the so-called 'tourist gaze' from the provincial identity.

## THE FOGO ISLAND PROJECT'S HISTORIES, LEGENDS AND MYTHS

The films themselves are the ultimate primary source for this story: twenty-seven produced during the original production period of 1967-68, and four more from 1971-72.<sup>6</sup> Until recently the films were difficult to find. My assumption that I could find them in a number of libraries or borrow them easily from the National Film Board was incorrect; nowhere were they archived or even catalogued as a set.<sup>7</sup> The best description I could find was in the National Film Board's 1986 catalogue (now out of print), the source of the list of films described and discussed in this paper. In late 2007, the Memorial University Digital Archives Initiative (DAI) posted many of the Fogo Island films online; the site includes a number of films produced solely by the Extension Service both before and after the partnership with the NFB. In the summer of 2009, the NFB announced plans to establish an "e-cinema" on Fogo Island in co-operation with the Shorefast Foundation, which will make much of the NFB catalogue (presumably including the Fogo Island films) available to islanders upon request.<sup>8</sup>

The files of the late Fred Earle include many backstage notes from the development of both the Fogo Island Co-operative and the film project which helped it along, and as such are extremely valuable. Earle was the local field officer for MUN Extension; his papers show his active involvement in and encouragement of the Fogo Island Improvement Committee and its efforts to ensure the island's future, and help illustrate his vital role in the films' production process.<sup>9</sup> The papers of Colin Low and MUN Extension (including those of the late Tony Williamson, who

would later take the Fogo Process to Labrador) illustrate the details of the work done in Montreal and St. John's. Don Snowden published little before he died in 1984, but researcher Wendy Quarry's extensive conversations with him emphasize his determination to see film used as a catalyst for community development on Fogo Island.

The picture is rounded out further by the work of a scholarly observer who lived on the island in the year preceding the film crew's arrival. Sociologist Robert DeWitt's research includes extensive material from anonymous interviews, in which a wider range of Fogo Islanders spoke more frankly than was sometimes the case in front of the cameras. Their comments do not contradict the films, but help to establish a deeper context for the discussions and attitudes seen in them.

In most histories of Canadian film and of the National Film Board, discussions of the Fogo Island project focus on the NFB's role, and give exclusive or near-exclusive attention and credit for the project to Colin Low. While *Extension* is referred to fairly frequently in contemporary *Challenge for Change* documents, most NFB histories and film-studies discussions make only passing reference (if any) to Memorial's involvement.<sup>10</sup> The impression is usually left that the film project prompted Fogo Islanders to think about starting a co-operative; however, *Extension* and others had been trying to encourage interest in starting a co-op for several years before the NFB arrived. The literature is also inconsistent in many of the details of the Fogo Island project: the order of events, conditions on the island before the film crew's arrival, production dates, and incorrect place names. Even the number of films produced varies among accounts. This last discrepancy is understandable, since more than two dozen short films about Fogo Island and the Fogo Island Project were produced in the years around the time of the Newfoundland Project proper; some were made by MUN *Extension* or local groups independently of the NFB, showing up in some archival searches but not others.<sup>11</sup>

## DUELLING BACKSTORIES 1: THE NFB AGENDA

The Fogo Island films were a pilot project for the NFB's *Challenge for Change* initiative, an important chapter in the film board's history. Over more than a decade, the federally-funded film board encouraged people in a wide range of communities to discuss, complain about and consider grassroots solutions for social problems and government inaction on them. Scores of films resulted from these engagements before the program petered out around 1980.

In his history of the NFB, Gary Evans says the roots of *Challenge for Change* are in a 1965 letter from Gordon Robertson, the clerk of Privy Council and a member of the Film Board, to the NFB's commissioner, Guy Roberge. Robertson told Roberge that, "he believed there was little understanding of the way in which poverty can ... become self-perpetuating, despite the existence of social services and of

welfare programmes. He thought that a film on poverty could be of real value.”<sup>12</sup> Evans says Roberge assigned Executive Producer John Kemeny to develop a proposal for a series of films on poverty, and took it to R.A.J. Phillips at the Privy Council Office. A series of meetings followed with advisors from fifteen different departments to discuss ideas and storylines with the filmmakers. Finally, a core group of federal departments<sup>13</sup> and the NFB pooled \$400,000 for the two-year experiment which would become Challenge for Change.<sup>14</sup>

Although the Fogo Island films would set a tone for Challenge for Change, most writers also cite the influence of an earlier documentary on the political and ethical approaches in the new program. *The Things I Cannot Change* was seen as an impressive but disturbing case study of contemporary urban poverty. It was intensely controversial for its unflinching depiction of its central character, who later claimed the notoriety ruined his life. There was much debate within the Challenge for Change committee and the NFB in general about whether filmmakers had the right to expose a subject’s life in so raw a fashion, and whether the subject had fully understood the nature of the project and his role in it.<sup>15</sup> The debate led to a consensus that the power relationship between filmmaker and subject should not be taken for granted, but negotiated at every stage. After *The Things I Cannot Change*, Challenge for Change needed to prove that film could be a positive influence for disadvantaged individuals and groups.

The NFB had long prided itself on an activist agenda; its founder, John Grierson, had once described his job in part as being “one inch to the left of the party in power.”<sup>16</sup> In the 1960s the Board and its filmmakers were also influenced by the trends of *cinéma vérité/cinéma direct* and the French New Wave. According to Jones, the NFB Challenge for Change unit, led by executive producer John Kemeny, first envisioned the program in three streams. One of these would be almost completely in the hands of ‘the people’: the *process* of discussion, and looking for solutions to problems, would itself be more important than the *product*, i.e., the film which resulted from it.<sup>17</sup> This category, known as process film, was highly innovative; it was aimed at empowering disenfranchised, poor, underprivileged and underserved communities. The motto was “process over product,” meaning that the films were unimportant *as* films; their value was in helping the process of social change. The Newfoundland Project would be the first of the projects in that stream.<sup>18</sup>

Colin Low was assigned to direct the Newfoundland Project. He had begun his career in the animation department of the NFB; his first documentary effort, following an Alberta cowboy at roundup time, won first prize at the Venice Film Festival in 1954. He went on to direct many documentaries, among them *City of Gold*, about the Klondike Gold Rush, and *Circle of the Sun*, in which a young oil worker returns home to his Blood reserve. These were films which explored the tensions between the individual and the wider world, between development, modernity and traditional ways of life. The development stage of Challenge for

Change coincided with the end of Low's work for Expo '67: *Labyrinth*, the giant multi-screen production for the Canadian pavilion, had taken five years to make, and would lead to the development of the IMAX large-screen film format. Low was looking for new challenges and is said to have gravitated to the project for a range of reasons: frustration with the "glorification of the individual filmmaker"; concern with the nationalist tone of films coming out of Quebec; a growing awareness of class disparities and environmental problems in Canada; and a curiosity about the "new twist to [the] collaborative relationship" offered by the Challenge for Change concept.<sup>19</sup>

The NFB histories offer no explanation for why filmmakers chose to go to Newfoundland before going west, north or to native reserves (all of which they would do later); nor is there much detail as to how they came to choose Fogo over other parts of the province. Evans says only that:

Low chose Fogo as his subject after examining several federal-provincial resettlement projects in another part of Newfoundland, where pork-barrelling was a way of life. He believed that to have made a film indicting the authorities would have stirred emotions, then left the population worse off than before. Such a film probably would have also meant a stillbirth for Challenge for Change. He chose Fogo Island because it had an informal improvement committee, rather than local government, and because the people were determined to resist resettlement. He arrived to discover the government freezing out services in hope that the people would partly resettle themselves.<sup>20</sup>

In conversation with Jones, Low is blunt:

I began my work on Fogo *after* I had examined a couple of federal-provincial resettlement projects in another part of Newfoundland. They were criminal in their indifference to people and were an example of political porkbarrelling I could not believe. I could have shot an indictment of the programme easily but I realized that it would be politically suicidal — it would have ruined any chances of the Challenge for Change programme in the province in the early stages of the programme.<sup>21</sup>

It may be that these quotations draw on the same interview, but they clearly suggest that Low felt pressures on the line between the documentary church and the welfare state, even at the height of the socially-conscious 1960s. In any event, neither of these accounts explains why Fogo Island, or even Newfoundland, was on Low's shopping list in the first place. The filmmakers' gaze was being gently guided by their would-be partners in the exercise.

## DUELLING BACKSTORIES 2: THE EXTENSION AGENDA

There is a history of government and social-service attempts to encourage community and co-operative development in Newfoundland, often through the use of broadcast and moving-image media. Webb has described how the Commission of Government assigned the Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland (BCN) a mandate to encourage adult education and co-ops; among its broadcasters was the Director of Co-operatives, Ted Russell.<sup>22</sup> Russell's support for co-operatives would continue after Confederation, particularly through his famous radio series, *The Chronicles of Uncle Mose*. Prior to the arrival of the NFB, the MUN Extension Service had already moved into film and television through its Media Unit, which was first established in 1961 to record classroom lectures and the like.<sup>23</sup> In 1962, *Decks Awash*, a program on fisheries issues, made its debut on the private television station CJON. By 1967, it was an established arm of the Extension Service, with copies of some programs circulated to remote communities for screenings.<sup>24</sup> The early 1960s also saw the beginning of a network of Extension field officers outside St. John's. Fred Earle was one of the first; in early 1961 he set up his office in Lewisporte, to serve an area which included his home turf of Fogo Island and Change Islands.

Extension's interest in co-operatives and media as tools of community development increased with the arrival of Donald Snowden as the new Extension Service Director in early 1965. Snowden's background included work in co-operative development in the Arctic with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.<sup>25</sup> He was involved in the establishment of at least one of the early artist-run Inuit co-ops, at Baker Lake, NWT, a project which facilitated the explosion in the native commercial art market.<sup>26</sup> Snowden first visited Newfoundland in 1964 to conduct a study for the federal government and the Co-operative Union of Canada regarding potential co-operative development in the province. Even allowing for a business-like politeness, the CUC's characterization of his work shows admiration: "Mr. Snowden brought to the task a wealth of experience and training in journalism, community organization, resource development, government service, and co-operatives ... This is no armchair appraisal of the co-operatives of Newfoundland but a thorough examination based on personal contact with scores of communities and hundreds of individuals."<sup>27</sup>

Snowden's report outlined the history of co-ops and buying clubs in Newfoundland; the many failed co-op ventures were usually due to insufficient administrative, management and educational support. His findings included the suggestion that Fogo Island "merits special attention by the Newfoundland Co-operative Union."<sup>28</sup> He noted that Memorial University's Extension Service "has embarked upon a broad program, most of whose components are designed for rural Newfoundlanders ... bringing organized music and drama to some rural parts of the province ... [and is involved] with the development of television programming that will acquaint rural citi-



zens with changes and techniques in the primary industries in which many of them are engaged.”<sup>29</sup> He strongly recommended that Extension take an active and leading role in co-operative work as well.<sup>30</sup> Within the year, he was hired to take charge of that work and more, as head of the Extension Service.

Quarry reports that Snowden started working in short order on a plan to use film in community development:

It all began in 1965 when he read the Economic Council of Canada’s *Report on Poverty in Canada*. ‘When I saw that I was enraged [Snowden said]. The report dealt with poverty in terms of urban values, it was written from the perspective of urban economists writing about poverty in the country and not knowing what the hell people thought about poverty, who had lived in places that were by their [the economists’] definition of poor.’ (Quarry, 1984; 32) As a result of this reaction, Snowden thought of producing a series of films on poverty in Newfoundland.... Snowden described how he got in touch with R.A.J. Phillips in the Privy Council who was in charge of ... ‘The War on Poverty Program in Canada.’<sup>31</sup>

Snowden told Quarry that Phillips visited Newfoundland, and at Phillips’ request, Snowden filed a letter and proposal for the films, but never received a response. This is presumably the same R.A.J. Phillips mentioned in Evans’s account above. Quarry says Snowden “speculated that Phillips ... [visited the NFB] and suggested the idea of making a series of films on poverty... The first Snowden heard of the idea, however, was when he was summoned to the Film Board to meet with film producer John Kemeny.” Snowden was happy to hear that Kemeny was considering Colin Low for the project: “Snowden had worked with Low’s films in the Arctic and knew him to be a sensitive film producer capable of communicating with a wide range of people.... It was decided that Colin Low would come to Newfoundland and Snowden would arrange his itinerary to show him some four or five different [Newfoundland communities] for filming. Snowden saved Fogo Island until the last.”<sup>32</sup> He introduced Low to Fred Earle, and in the spring of 1967, they went to a meeting of the local development committee, where they discussed the project with the committee members.<sup>33</sup> Though he did consult other government and private sources, Low decided that the issues on Fogo Island, the presence and support of Fred Earle, and the work of the Improvement Committee were the combination of elements he needed: “I should admit that the idea of an island [also] appealed to me as a symbol of community. This notion was hardly useful on the island but I felt it might have a value if the film went further afield.... After a few days with Fred Earle I was also confident of his ability and familiarity with the local situation. I would not have attempted this assignment without his support and enthusiasm.”<sup>34</sup>

## OUTPORT NEWFOUNDLAND: BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

For Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, and the world at large, the 1960s were a tumultuous time, but the sources and nature of tumult varied. In North America and most of the Western world, the summer of 1967 is itself legendary; the ‘summer of love’ has become emblematic of the social change, youthful idealism, protest and energy of the 1960s. Like its baby boomers, Canada was also coming of age, and preparing for its hundredth birthday party in 1967. Newfoundland was influenced by both waves; at the same time as it was being “dragged kicking and screaming into the twentieth century.”<sup>35</sup>

During the decade after Confederation, Canada and its newest province had integrated social programs, defence, trade, political parties, myriad regulations, codes, and procedures, and of course fisheries policy.<sup>36</sup> Three themes permeate the popular and academic literature: first, Premier Joseph Smallwood’s power, near-total after the 1966 general election landslide, had peaked; second, the post-Confederation generation was coming of age; and third, the controversial resettlement program loomed over fishing communities such as those on Fogo Island, sparking a debate over how to balance modernity and tradition.

On Fogo Island, the forces of modernity at home and abroad were pushing its ten scattered communities to the edge of social and economic collapse. On top of the province’s growing pains inside Confederation, changes and problems in the fishery had hit outport Newfoundland hard. The traditional small-scale inshore fishery was beset on all sides by new, capital-intensive technologies such as longliners and draggers, an ever-extending international fishing zone, the shift to frozen fish and a growing demand for species other than cod. Catches were down. Merchants were leaving, and communities that had survived for centuries seemed not far behind. Neither the federal nor the provincial government was overmuch concerned with supporting the inshore fishery through a modernization period. Both saw centralization and rationalization of processing facilities as inevitable, and neither had much sense of how outport communities and their citizens might want — or be able — to adapt.<sup>37</sup>

Focusing on industrialization and improved social services, the federal and provincial governments saw part of the solution to Newfoundland’s poor economic performance and low incomes in centralization and resettlement. Beginning in 1953, the province offered help to residents of small communities who agreed to relocate. Individual households could apply for financial support, and additional funding was provided if everyone (this was later reduced to 75% of the people in a community) agreed to leave. By the time the province officially dropped the resettlement policy in 1971, more than 24,000 people had been resettled.<sup>38</sup> The premier was still a larger-than-life figure, particularly in the outports. In the 1960s some people still believed that he was personally responsible for the existence and ad-

ministration of post-Confederation social programs.<sup>39</sup> This sense that people's lives were controlled by Smallwood and civil servants may have led in part to the popular misconception in places such as Fogo Island that communities could be resettled simply by "government order."<sup>40</sup>

In any event, the frictions between traditional lifestyles and industrial and social development were matters of cultural life and death. Like scores of other outports, Fogo Island was dependent on the small-boat fishery, and fishing families lacked the capital to upgrade to new boats and other technologies. The island's post-Confederation baby boomers were coming of age with high-school diplomas and expectations of a life beyond the fishery and the truck system. These were just a few of the influences on a historic stream of outmigration that was threatening to become a tide.

After three hundred years as the launching point and service centre for the Labrador fishery and as the home of many inshore fishing families, Fogo Island's future was uncertain. The inshore trap fishery was dying, unable to compete with longliners on the inshore grounds and the first factory trawlers working at the edge of the twelve-mile limit. The merchants who for generations had bought and sold salt cod and had conducted their business with fishermen through the truck system either would not, or could not, compete with foreign ships buying straight from the fishermen, nor convert to dealing with fresh catches and other species. None of the small local fish plants was in operation, and infrastructure was inadequate to ship fresh fish off the island; there was not even a local system of finding out the going price for the various qualities and types of fish. If a fisherman held out against a merchant's offered price for a fresh catch there was no guarantee that foreigners would better it, or even show up in time to buy it before it spoiled.<sup>41</sup> In the spring of 1967, the last of the old Fogo Island merchant houses, Earle and Sons, announced it was closing for good at the end of the season.<sup>42</sup>

The choice for some seemed to be between the rock of welfare and the hard places of resettlement and outmigration; with government fisheries policies directed toward industrialization and centralization, it was easy for Fogo Islanders to think they had no other options. As one of the Fogo Island films would later express (and DeWitt seems to agree), the settlers had always depended on the merchants or the clergy to make their everyday decisions.<sup>43</sup> This generalization, however broad, appears to have held in the genesis of the Fogo Island Improvement Committee. Its roots were in the Fogo Island Road Improvement Association, a group "of clergy, merchants, teachers and fishermen" who first met in 1964 to lobby the government for road improvements. They quickly concluded "that the Association could serve a useful function in pressuring the Federal and Provincial governments for other major improvements." The Committee would struggle to overcome "inter-community jealousies, suspicion, and even violent conflict,"<sup>44</sup> but its existence would be considered a plus for National Film Board officials and producers in their search for partners and subjects in *Challenge for Change*.

Sociologist Robert DeWitt went to Fogo Island in the fall of 1966 to study religious behaviour and relations among the island's denominational groups, but he soon expanded his plans to include a wider view of Island society and its views on development and change. Within a few weeks of his arrival, it "increasingly became clear that resettlement was an important issue for most people there ... fear over resettlement was expressed at Town Council, Improvement Committee and church meetings; and even the women and children asked what would become of them if they were 'forced' from the island."<sup>45</sup> The idea that the government was preparing not just to coerce, but to force Fogo Islanders to resettle is perpetuated to this day in most accounts of the time.<sup>46</sup> While persistent inaction from St. John's on a number of matters may have seemed like a kind of coercion or 'plot' (as some islanders described it to DeWitt), the opposite was the case: a report to cabinet would state clearly that, far from something to be encouraged, mass resettlement for Fogo Island was a bad idea.<sup>47</sup> The resettlement program was not designed to handle 5000 people at a time. Where would they go? The report even recommends a government subsidy to entice Earle and Sons to stay open for another year. At the same time, however, there was a steady stream of inquiries about resettlement from a number of communities on Fogo Island; DeWitt reported that 67 households had applied to the program between 1965 and 1968.<sup>48</sup>

DeWitt found that Fogo Islanders were generally ambivalent or apathetic about the future, and concluded that many had "favourable attitudes to resettlement ... The conditions that the Islanders ask for these attitudes include the provision of jobs and adequate housing in the new setting ... [emphasizing] that those responsible for planning either resettlement or development must take into account the important sociological issues involved."<sup>49</sup> His study portrays the island's scattered small communities as sharply divided by religion and class, and unsure and fearful of a future over which many felt they had no control. Of the able-bodied men on the island, 60% received welfare at some point in the year, and the local welfare officer's caseload was one of the heaviest in the province.<sup>50</sup> For generations, the communities had been remote even from each other: "Many of the older residents suggest that it has been only during the past few years, since the road was completed, that the idea of being a 'Fogo Islander' rather than a Tilting Harbour or Deep Bay man — really has become relevant."<sup>51</sup> Those households with electricity and access to broadcast signals bought new gadgets which showed them a world of wealth and ease, not the least of whose benefits were smooth paved roads, automatic washers, and indoor plumbing. "Before television, we didn't know what we were missing," one resident told the researcher.<sup>52</sup>

DeWitt describes Fred Earle's 1964 arrival as the new Extension field officer as having given "new hope to all those who claimed an interest in improvement. Here was the man, they felt, who could provide a well-needed link with the remote government in St. John's."<sup>53</sup> It is hard to imagine any of the developments that followed Earle's appointment happening without him and his employers at the Exten-

sion Service. In the Fogo Island films, he appears to be an interested but uninvolved observer of events, but nothing could have been further from the case. Earle was no outsider: he was born on nearby Change Islands and moved to Fogo Island in his teens, the current owner of the Earle and Sons merchant house was a cousin, and Fred had once worked for Earle and Sons, first as an errand boy and later as a book-keeper.<sup>54</sup>

Earle's Extension office was in Lewisporte, but he made frequent visits to Fogo Island. His job was "to carry on community development work ... This would necessitate frequent consultation with federal and provincial government departments ... [including] the ARDA division and the Co-operative Extension Division."<sup>55</sup> His background and his engaging personality seems to have enabled him to move between classes, religious denominations and communities as he coaxed and lectured Fogo Islanders to save their communities for themselves — but not ultimately *by* themselves. He and the Extension Service were strong, if relatively quiet, partners with the Fogo Island Improvement Committee. Earle's active, even take-charge role becomes clear in his first year as Extension Service officer, as he worked to organize an

island-wide conference ... We will have a meeting of the Improvement Committee next week and decide where it will be held. We will invite chaps from the Provincial Government to attend and this will give the Fogo Island people [a chance] to express their needs ... I am a believer that if all Fogo Island can assemble, and have fellows from the Government out to listen to our trouble and desires, everyone will have a better [understanding].<sup>56</sup>

Earle's files between 1964 and 1967 include correspondence with Dan Roberts, a Change Islands merchant. Early in his tenure with Extension, Earle encouraged Roberts to "[g]et in touch with me anytime I may be of help. On any occasion a group of fishermen would like to meet me just let me know and I would be happy to attend."<sup>57</sup> He seems to have found a kindred spirit in Roberts, and he drew on the latter's advice as he worked to establish some marine-related adult education courses: "I remember you once mentioned that Change Islands fellows would not go to Fogo Island to attend classes but they would be interested in attending if the instructors set up at Change Islands."<sup>58</sup> By 1966, the tone of the letters is one between colleagues, as Earle confides, "I am certainly glad you mentioned the fact [in a recent conversation] that there is not sufficient co-operation amongst Fogo Islanders. I have been pressing that point a long time. The Island can best survive when they [as a unit] work for the welfare of the island and not their individual communities."<sup>59</sup> At some point during this period, Roberts became owner of the Fogo Island Motel, located in what was then the 'middle of nowhere,' i.e., the centre of the island.<sup>60</sup> Roberts became a major voice on the Improvement Committee, which eventually moved its meetings to the Fogo Island Motel, within rela-

tively easy reach of all communities, and neutral territory for various community factions.

One of the central tenets of the Extension Service philosophy was that it should support, not lead, community development initiatives. It is important to note that Earle's and Snowden's personal interests in Fogo Island appear to have never crossed the line into acting without local consensus or direction; however, having found people who might be disposed to their ideas, they actively encouraged and supported those people. Snowden could cheer on the co-op idea even as he played devil's advocate. Consider his comments to some islanders before the co-op was established:

You're going to have to convince people that you're very serious about this. You're not going to convince them by simply having a lot of meetings where you say, 'Well, we want to have a producer cooperative.' You're going to convince them by having a lot of meetings ... *and* by putting a percentage of your catch into an investment fund which may not be used until ... next year. ... it's a different thing, I suggest, from signing a petition ... to government where you get 800 or 900 names on it. You're talking about money now. You're talking about involvement. You're talking about loyalty and responsibility. And these come a little bit harder than putting your name on a telegram ... This is the time where you put up or shut up.<sup>61</sup>

With Fred Earle's encouragement, the Improvement Committee asked the Extension Service to sponsor a fisheries conference on Fogo Island in the spring of 1967. Among the items for discussion was the idea of a fisheries co-op; though "many ... had mixed feelings" in the wake of earlier failures, "the idea soon spread throughout the meeting."<sup>62</sup> The Improvement Committee wanted government support for a co-operative partnership with the Maritime Fishermen's Union, but the province turned down the idea. Even a delegation to the premier in St. John's was unable to make any headway. The process seemed to be facing a dead end as the filmmakers arrived.

## THE EXPERIMENT COMES TOGETHER

The Extension contingent consisted of community workers with an interest in media, and the NFB crew was media workers with an interest in community work. Both organizations were organized along fluid, even *ad hoc* lines, both were intensely engaged in the work at hand, and all were accustomed to working in flexible teams in which getting the job done often came before paperwork or punching a clock. This may be part of why the literature includes so many different versions of how and when things happened, and of who was responsible for one idea or another.

A management studies paper unintentionally sheds light on how MUN Extension and the NFB forged so successful a relationship, and why that relationship left behind so sketchy a paper trail. It classifies the Film Board's management structure as an "adhocracy" — an organization which, among its other characteristics, "operates in an environment that is both dynamic and complex, demanding innovation of a fairly sophisticated nature. Each output tends to be unique..."<sup>63</sup> The article describes the NFB hierarchy as relatively weak: "Controls exist in the NFB and attempts are made at formal planning, but most of the real coordination has to be achieved through mutual adjustment."<sup>64</sup> The authors might also have been speaking of Snowden and the Extension Service. There is no comparable study of the Extension Service, but Earle later recalled that when he was hired, his new boss "said that Fred should get on with the first task of creating and defining the job itself... Both community development and field work were in their infancy, a fact which gave Earle the freedom to do pretty well what he wanted."<sup>65</sup>

MUN Extension and the NFB appear by all accounts to have worked well together; many of the people on both sides of the partnership apparently became friends as well as colleagues, and some moved back and forth between St. John's and the NFB. It was an extremely good match for everyone. As the Fogo Island film project fell under time and political pressures, the team's flexibility would lead to innovation. The shared informal, "get-it-done" approach of the NFB and Extension made for a successful partnership, but it also makes it difficult to describe conclusively how that partnership evolved. As a former federal mandarin himself, Snowden would have known very well that a chance for partnership with the NFB was a golden opportunity for Fogo Island in the troubled spring of 1967. On their part, Colin Low and the NFB saw clear advantages to working with the support of an experienced social animator such as Snowden, not to mention the guiding hand of Fred Earle, as the crew arrived on a remote island whose people were often mistrustful of strangers.

Low's good intentions and admirable accomplishments alone would not have carried much weight on Fogo Island. At first, the proposal for filming was not welcomed by the Fogo Islanders, who did not trust the outsiders, and "refused to talk on camera, since they were nervous about what friends might say or what might happen to them if the film were shown elsewhere."<sup>66</sup> After some persuasion from Low (and, one may guess, Earle, though it is not recorded), Evans says they eventually agreed to participate:

Low promised that he would show [the film] to the participants before anyone else would see it. They trusted him and he kept his word.... He shot the films in a rational, unemotional way; high emotion and conflict look interesting on national television, but he believed those two elements hindered the communication process (and would) exacerbate, not lessen, tensions. He saw himself as a kind of mediator....<sup>67</sup>



Even with Earle's support and their own promises, the filmmakers would not be able to persuade everyone to participate in the Fogo Experiment. There is a range of accounts regarding who appears in the Fogo Island films and why. D.B. Jones says that Low had first "encountered apathy about the project, an apathy rooted in deep hostility and bitterness toward the government."<sup>68</sup> In a 1968 report on the Memorial/NFB partnership, Low said, "I had more trouble eliminating potential candidates [for interviews] than in getting candidates."<sup>69</sup> The filmmakers were working in a narrow production window, but the fact remains that almost all of the principal players were members of the Improvement Committee or were other supporters of the co-operative idea. This fact is never mentioned in the films and is largely unknown beyond Fogo Island, particularly since almost none of those speaking in the films are identified. This was well-known on the island, however, and would be a point of some criticism after the films were completed, as was the fact that while there would much discussion of welfare, no one who was actually on social assistance could be persuaded to speak on camera.

In a society so strongly influenced by religion, members of the clergy are also conspicuous by their absence. This is addressed, but not explained, in *The Specialists at Memorial Discuss the Fogo Films*, when the filmmakers acknowledge that most clergymen declined to participate.<sup>70</sup> Again, DeWitt's research suggests an explanation. In 1969, he wrote that the "Fogo Island Improvement Committee represents the 'anti-resettlement' forces on the Island.... The exclusion of the clergymen from active participation [on the committee], when they were identified as either for resettlement or neutral, suggests the degree of emotionalism attached to the resettlement issue."<sup>71</sup> This dispute may well have influenced the clerics' decisions to decline the filmmakers' invitations. What is clear is that there was sufficient consensus that the film crew joined Low on the island at the beginning of August; but the partners had their work cut out for them. Over a five- to six-week period, they shot in eight of the island's ten communities, with an extra stop on Change Islands.

## WHAT THE CAMERA SAW

The crew shot twenty hours of film during their stay; most of the material consisted of interviews or other conversations, but there were also snapshots of community activities (*A Wedding and a Party*, *Jim Decker's Party*, *The Children of Fogo Island*, *The Songs of Chris Cobb*) which would serve to engage audiences at the public screenings that winter. It is perhaps a minor issue, in historical terms, that the Fogo Island films have an undeserved reputation for being choppy, hard to watch and generally uninteresting to an outside viewer. It is true that, since the films were made principally for local audiences familiar with the



issues and speakers, an outside viewer needs some extra background to understand many of the storylines and comments, in much the same way as someone arriving late to a conversation or a play; and in many cases, the viewer also needs an ear for some of the stronger Newfoundland accents and speech patterns.<sup>72</sup> That said, the Fogo Island films are not like what we have come to think of as ‘community films,’ i.e., largely unplanned, shot by amateurs on consumer-quality video cameras, and edited roughly, if at all. Shot by a senior NFB cinematographer and directed by Low, the 1967 films are sophisticated film productions by some of the best filmmakers of the day; the framing — both literal and figurative — of speakers, issues and events is crisp and engaging.<sup>73</sup> More important is the professional quality of the editorial content, which likely played a subtle but influential role in the success of the project at the time: much of what the subjects have to say is concise, blunt, and often provocative, especially by the standards of the day. A few of the memorable examples:

That is the sad thing, that the people that we knew through the Depression years, who were our best fishermen, who are still keeping their end up — they’re making a living, not a good one, but staying independent and trying hard to do so. They see their neighbours who are much better off than they are just folding their hands, you know.... It’s more rewarding not to work.... That’s the unbalanced part of it.

— Brian Earle, in *Brian Earle on Merchants and Welfare*

FRED: Why do you think fish is so scarce as it is?

BILLY: I don’t know, Fred, but — so many boats, offshore boats dragging up the fish; I suppose the fish can’t stand it. They’re over here from Russia and all the countries. One time, well, if fish didn’t swim in the cod trap or you [didn’t] get them on the trawl, you didn’t get them; but now they throws down, just scoops up everything from the bottom. So fish can’t stand that. I don’t think it can. I might just be one of the foolish ones. But I don’t think the government give the inshore fishermen a square deal, sir.

— Fred Earle and Billy Crane, in *Billy Crane Moves Away*

This particular government official told me, the reason why he didn’t attend the fisheries conference [held on Fogo Island the previous spring] was because there was too much bullshit went on. [shakes his head] I didn’t sleep a wink that night, when I heard that. Because as far as I was concerned, the conference we had here last year, there was no bullshit handed out by the people on Fogo Island. If there was any, it was handed out by the government bull.

— Dan Roberts, in *Citizen Discussions*

Among the unique qualities of the Fogo Island films is what Low called their vertical structure. The vast majority of the films are shorts, each featuring one speaker, part of a public meeting, or a panel discussion on a single topic, in-

stead of intercutting speakers and scenes in a more traditional documentary approach. Again, accounts vary on the degree of planning behind this approach, but the records of the time show it was a response to circumstances, time pressures, and the impact of speakers such as Billy Crane. As Low put it:

The major decision in editing was to cut the material vertically rather than horizontally. In other words, the films were based on personalities discussing a variety of issues, rather than an issue incorporating a variety of personalities. The material was shot in this manner, and to start restructuring would have required more time than was available. More important, it was as valuable to highlight personalities as it was to present issues, since action would require leaders and community support for them. This method also avoids the obvious editorializing that occurs when personalities are juxtaposed by an editor. Furthermore, certain people did embody specific issues and horizontal editing was not needed.<sup>74</sup>

## THE FINAL CUT

By mid-November 1967 the first edits were completed on most of the films.<sup>75</sup> Screenings began on Fogo Island on 22 November and continued to the end of January. Most meetings began and ended with lighter, ‘entertainment’ films bookending the main program of two or three ‘issue’ films, each followed by discussions. Audiences’ responses ranged from passive to heated: “Many times we endured long silences before discussion started, but once it started, everyone got into it. We strayed from the format on several occasions, with disastrous results.”<sup>76</sup> In Seldom, on 24 November, the final film shown was *Brian Earle on Merchants and Welfare*, and the merchant’s comments led most of the audience to walk out before a discussion could begin; attempts in Joe Batt’s Arm to suggest a greater role for women in the island’s public affairs met with “no response ... perhaps skoffing [*sic*] amusement.” A 1 December screening saw few people and “practically no participation” because the local Pentecostal minister had spoken out against the film project.<sup>77</sup> As the screenings continued, however, a buzz began to build around the island; the debates became more spirited, and many people wished they could go on longer: “Nov. 29 ... most animated discussion yet on merits of longliners, gill-nets, cod traps. Outright attack on improvement committee, two members offer resignation (not taken up).”<sup>78</sup>

Those who appeared on camera were allowed to decide on any changes, but there was only one small edit. Low’s account suggests that audiences were more concerned with keeping comments in than with taking them out: “[During the screenings] people everywhere asked me if their statements were going to be run off the Island. Many people were concerned that the statements re-

ceive a broad distribution ... Several people on Fogo Island expressed the idea that we would not dare run their statements in St. John's or Ottawa."<sup>79</sup>

Still, those unwilling to speak publicly in the summer seemed to feel the same way in the winter. Attempts to record the screenings on film ended when facilitators concluded they prevented many people from speaking up, but in mid-December, a film crew returned to record the founding meeting of the Fogo Island Co-operative. By 31 January 1968 there had been thirty-four separate screenings on Fogo Island, with a total audience of around 4500, as well as four screenings in St. John's for various university and government officials.<sup>80</sup> Here, in the final stages of the project, one more obstacle stood between the films and their final release. The Islanders' concerns regarding censorship were well founded. After a private screening in Montreal, the president of Memorial University, Lord Taylor, said he "thought the Fogo films would cause political problems ... particularly since some of the comments in the films were extremely critical of the provincial government." Taylor thought the films should be toned down; Snowden told Quarry that "everyone at the screening became upset and even talked of stopping work on Fogo."<sup>81</sup>

Snowden called on a friend, author Richard Gwyn, to intercede. Gwyn had just completed his biography of Smallwood; he felt Taylor was over-reacting, and suggested that the films be shown to the premier and cabinet.<sup>82</sup> Gwyn predicted their reaction would be largely positive, and he was right. After the January screening, provincial Fisheries Minister Aidan Maloney was interviewed for a government response; some of his comments were incorporated into two of the Fogo Island films.<sup>83</sup> Like the films' vertical structure, this part of what the producers called the 'feedback loop' may not have been part of the plan, but it was touted as another coup for the project, marking "the first back and forth use of the material between communities and decision makers [as] another part of the Fogo Process was born."<sup>84</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Some years later, Donald Snowden would reflect on the work of the summer of 1967:

Today few people on Fogo speak often about the filming, yet many believe their lives were changed enormously by it. This can never be accurately measured. But it is certain that the fishermen formed an island-wide producers' cooperative which handled and processed large catches, enabling them to keep the profits on their island. Unemployment of able-bodied men disappeared, and government directed their efforts to helping people stay.... Films did not do these things: people did them. There is little

doubt, however, that film created an awareness and self-confidence that was needed for people-advocated development to occur.<sup>85</sup>

The films were completed and the changes began to happen within six months of the film crew's arrival on Fogo Island, an astonishingly quick turnaround by the standards of the day. Were the films' famous vertical structure and two-way conversations all part of a carefully conceived and brilliantly innovative process, or a creative but ad hoc solution to external pressures, that happened to work? It appears to have been a bit of both. The final products of the "experiment" on Fogo Island and at the NFB were the result of hard work and innovative thinking from a number of sources. The Fogo Island films did not singlehandedly "save" Fogo Island from a government plan to force resettlement for two reasons. The first is simply that there was no such plan. Although many islanders believed rumours of its existence, and inaction from St. John's reinforced their belief, the government was in fact advised against encouraging them to leave en masse. The second reason is that while the films are indeed innovative, provocative and effective, the story of the NFB's involvement was not the first but rather a later chapter in a long story, involving several years of meetings, research, education and community development work by the Improvement Committee and the Extension Service. While the Fogo Island Improvement Committee was indeed rooted in the community, it was not a group of 'average' fishermen, as the films suggest. Many if not most of the members were at least interested in the idea of establishing a co-op; their interest was actively supported and encouraged by ex-officio member Fred Earle, although much of his work was behind the scenes.

For filmmakers and communities who used the Fogo Process, it does not matter where the ideas came from. In a discussion of its effect on Newfoundland and Labrador social history, however, it becomes very important: through whose eyes, whose experiences and priorities were these images and ideas filtered? If the Fogo Experiment was entirely the brainchild of the NFB, as many Canadian writers assert, it is a short step to argue, as they have, that people from 'away' singlehandedly 'saved' Fogo Island.<sup>86</sup> It is not true. It is true that the driving forces behind the 1967 'experiment' on Fogo Island — the NFB's Challenge for Change team, the Memorial University of Newfoundland's Extension Service, and the Fogo Island Improvement Committee — were a remarkably complementary trio of skill sets and agendas, and the timing was opportune for all of them. But as the Newfoundlanders benefited from the world-class work of Colin Low and the NFB, so did the Film Board benefit handsomely from years of groundwork by MUN Extension, Fred Earle and Donald Snowden.

**Table: List of the Fogo Island Films**

<b>Title (in alphabetical order)</b>	<b>Running Time (approx.)</b>	<b>Released</b>
Andrew Britt* at Shoal Bay	14' 38"	1968
Billy Crane Moves Away	17' 40"	1968
Brian Earle on Merchants and Welfare	10' 10"	1968
The Children of Fogo Island	17' 30"	1968
Citizen Discussions	28' 16"	1968
Dan Roberts on Fishing	16' 18"	1968
Discussion on Welfare	06' 53"	1968
Fishermen's Meeting	27' 21"	1968
Fogo Island Improvement Committee	13' 18"	1968
Fogo's Expatriates	15' 06"	1968
Founding of the Co-operative	21' 18"	1968
Introduction to Fogo Island	16' 35"	1968
Jim Decker Builds a Longliner	19' 15"	1968
Jim Decker's Party	06' 46"	1968
Joe Kinsella on Education	07' 18"	1968
McGraths at Home and Fishing	11' 03"	1968
The Mercer Family	9' 58"	1968
The Merchant and the Teacher	13' 16"	1968
Some Problems of Fogo	21' 26"	1968
Songs of Chris Cobb	07' 41"	1968
Story of the Up Top	08' 55"	1968
Thoughts on Fogo and Norway		1968?
Tom Best on Co-operatives	12' 20"	1968
Two Cabinet Ministers	18' 50"	1968
A Wedding and a Party	10' 58"	1968
William Wells Talks About the Island	11' 55"	1968
A Woman's Place	16' 15"	1968
<b>Later films in/about the Fogo Experiment</b>		
Memo From Fogo	41' 55"	1972
The Specialists at Memorial Discuss the Fogo Films	26' 50"	1968?
"When I Go ... That's It!"	11' 27"	1972
Winds of Fogo, The	20' 24"	1969

**\*The name is misspelled in most archives and references: the correct surname is Brett**

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Donald Snowden, *The Co-operative Movement in Newfoundland: an ARDA study of co-operative organization from the viewpoint of industrial and social development, prepared for the government of Newfoundland by the Co-operative Union of Canada*, 102-103. The acronym ARDA referred to the administration and programs which were part of the Agricultural and Rural Development Act. ARDA was replaced in the first Trudeau government by the Department of Regional and Economic Expansion, or DREE.

<sup>2</sup>Colin Low (director), *An Introduction to Fogo Island* (National Film Board of Canada, 1967).

<sup>3</sup>The Extension Service was more than a department of continuing education; it included community outreach and focused on providing practical skills and information to outport communities. In St. John's, Extension offerings included music, visual arts and theatre programs. Concluding in the early 1990s that the framework had outlived its usefulness, the university closed it and replaced it with the more conventionally-focused department of Distance Education and Learning Technologies (DELT).

<sup>4</sup>It is important to differentiate among the stages in the growth of the Fogo Island exercise. Some writers use a number of descriptors interchangeably, but I refer to the moving-image records as the Fogo Island *films*; to the pre-production planning and principal photography periods, and the two combined, as the Fogo Island *project*; and to the developments after the project as the Fogo Process.

I use "Fogo Island" instead of "Fogo" in deference to sensitivities on the island; the fact that some people in communities outside the town of Fogo are bothered by the prospect of it getting all the 'credit' suggests that there is still progress to be made in the name of island unity. However, I have left the term "Fogo Process" as it is, since it appears so often that way in the literatures of film and community development.

<sup>5</sup>Toni Morrison, from the novel *Beloved*.

<sup>6</sup>A complete list of the films appears at the end of this article. The list differentiates between the 27 films actually produced as part of the process undertaken in the summer of 1967, and films related to the process, but produced later. For example, while *Winds of Fogo* is often discussed as one of the process films, it is a separate and more conventional documentary by Low, made the following year and focusing on William Wells, whom Low met during the first production period. Even NFB files contain different totals for the number of films produced in the summer of 1967, but the most common count is 27.

<sup>7</sup>When I began my research in 2006 I discovered that the Extension Services tape collection was not well-archived; the library catalogue listed some films in the sketchiest of terms. It was a similar story at the National Film Board: when I tried to order a complete set, I learned that only a few of the better known films had been digitized and transferred to DVD; in some cases, the NFB had to go back to the film prints to make VHS copies because there were none available. I am happy to report that these problems have been partly remedied. In late 2007 the Digital Archives Initiative project at Memorial University's Queen Elizabeth II Library posted many of the films online. The DAI's online postings exclude some of the films discussed here, and include others I have left out because they do not appear in the NFB record. The NFB's website includes periodic online screenings of some Fogo Island films, and one, *Billy Crane Moves Away*, appears to be a permanent posting. The NFB continues the ex-

pensive and slow process of digitizing its library, and more of the Fogo Island films are available each year.

<sup>8</sup>“Remote Fogo Island to get e-cinema,” cbc.ca, 17 June 2009 <<http://www.cbc.ca/technology/story/2009/06/17/fogo-island-cinema.html>>.

<sup>9</sup>I am grateful to Mr. Earle’s nephew and executor, Don Noble, for allowing me access to the files.

<sup>10</sup>D.B. Jones’s *Movies and Memoranda: an interpretive history of the National Film Board of Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Film Institute, 1981) does not mention MUN at all. Rodney C. James, in *Film as a National Art: the National Film Board of Canada and the film board idea* (New York: Arno Press, 1977) describes the NFB’s Newfoundland Project as “based in the Memorial University of Newfoundland, working through the University’s Department of Extension and Community Development Service” (196).

In *In the National Interest: a chronicle of the National Film Board of Canada from 1949 to 1989* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), Gary Evans credits only Low with the groundwork and production planning, right up to the first screenings, at which point he says Low “used a professional social worker to lead general discussions ... [Later] media dialogue was continued in other parts of the province by a Film Board-trained crew from Memorial University” (163-64). Patrick Watson says the “films were shot with the guidance and co-operation of the people [of Fogo Island] themselves,” noting parenthetically that unnamed people at Memorial “played a vital role in getting the Fogo experiment started.” (Patrick Watson, “Challenge for Change” in *Canadian Film Reader*, ed. Seth Feldman and Joyce Nelson (Toronto: Peter Nelson Associates, 1977), 113-114).

White’s chapter on *Winds of Fogo* in *The Cinema of Canada* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006) conflates *Winds of Fogo* with the films of the 1967 project and says Memorial was “a collaborator on the series” (74). In a more recent work, “Guys with Brylcreem Discussing Fish Processing: form, community and politics in the NFB’s Newfoundland Project” (in Darrell Varga, ed., *Rain/Drizzle/Fog: film and television in Atlantic Canada* [Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2009]), White pays more attention to Memorial’s involvement, describing Fred Earle as “a sort of Virgil of Low’s Dante” (107).

Zoe Druick’s *Projecting Canada: Government Policy and documentary film at the National Film Board*, (Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), notes that “the Department of Extension at Memorial University was an active participant in the process” (144), but credits the “NFB representatives” as having prepared and conducted all the interviews, discussions and screenings.

<sup>11</sup>White, in *Cinema of Canada*, counts 32, a total which includes *Winds of Fogo* and the later follow-up films; Evans counts 26; Sullivan counts 46, perhaps drawing on a library catalogue search (Joan Sullivan, “The Fogo Process,” *Newfoundland Quarterly* 99,4 (2007), 18). Stephen Crocker discusses the project as an early stage in the development of participatory media. He offers a balanced view of the partnership between the NFB and MUN Extension. See his “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, 59-75.

<sup>12</sup>Evans, *In the National Interest*, *op. cit.*, 158.

<sup>13</sup>The lists of departments involved at the start vary in different accounts. Evans (*In the National Interest*, 160) lists Manpower, Health and Welfare, the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Agency (ARDA) and the Special Planning Secretariat; James (*Film as*



a *National Art*, 192) lists Health and Welfare, Manpower and Immigration, Labour, Fisheries, Agriculture, Justice, the Atlantic Development Board and the Prairie Development Commission; Jones (*Movies and Memoranda*, 159) lists the original core as Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Agriculture, Health and Welfare, Labour, Regional Economic Expansion, the Secretary of State and the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. In any event, the makeup of the committee changed over time, and its numbers dwindled as the program lost support before its eventual demise in 1980.

<sup>14</sup>Evans, *In the National Interest*, 160.

<sup>15</sup>Evans, *In the National Interest*, 158-160.

<sup>16</sup>Cited in D.B. Jones, *Movies and Memoranda* (Toronto: Canadian Film Institute, 1981), 144.

<sup>17</sup>Jones, *Movies and Memoranda*, 159. James describes the framework a bit differently but both Jones and James agree on the issue of process films. (James, *Film as a National Art*, 193-96).

<sup>18</sup>The series includes examples from the other streams as well.

<sup>19</sup>Jones, *Movies and Memoranda*, 158-59.

<sup>20</sup>Evans, *In the National Interest*, 164. Emphasis added. There is no evidence in the historical record that the government was 'freezing out' services, though it was dragging its feet on Improvement Committee requests for help in the fishery. The immediate threat to 'services' lay in the planned departure of the Earles' merchant outlet.

<sup>21</sup>Jones, *Movies and Memoranda*, 162.

<sup>22</sup>Jeff Webb, "Mass Media," 1998, Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Website <<http://www.heritage.nf.ca/society/massmedia.html>>. Webb's *The Voice of Newfoundland: a social history of the Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland, 1939-1949* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008) explores this topic in extensive detail, as does Elizabeth Russell Miller's *Uncle Mose: the life of Ted Russell* (St. John's: Flanker Press, 2005).

<sup>23</sup>"Celebrate Memorial History: the 60s: report of the president for 1961-61," <http://www.mun.ca/mundays/60s/extension.html>

<sup>24</sup>*Annual Report 1963, Memorial University Extension Service — Decks Awash*, 2. Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

The papers of Fred Earle also include a flyer from October of 1967 offering at least fifteen "cinescopes of Decks Awash programmes ... available for community use." Most appear to be recordings of lectures or meetings on fisheries-related topics. Titles include "Cod," "Herring," "Japanese Squid Jiggers" and "Fishermen's Indemnity Plan" (Papers of Fred Earle, file name: Decks Awash).

Earle's papers contain many references to the popular demand for circulating copies of *Decks Awash*. In a letter dated August 8, 1964, Earle wrote to Joseph Small, a fisherman in Fogo, "I am sending along a couple copies of DECKS AWASH. These I promised you yesterday morning before I left Fogo. I hope you may find the contents interesting and useful" (Papers of Fred Earle, filename: Fogo).

<sup>25</sup>Entry in the *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, vol. 5 (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications and the Smallwood Heritage Foundation, 1994), 228.

<sup>26</sup>Kyra Vladykov Fisher, "The Baker Lake Printmaking Revival," *Arctic* 50, 2 (June 1997), 193.

<sup>27</sup>Foreword, *The Co-operative Movement in Newfoundland: an ARDA study*, i.



<sup>28</sup>Snowden, *The Co-operative Movement in Newfoundland: an ARDA study*, 44.

<sup>29</sup>Snowden, *The Co-operative Movement in Newfoundland: an ARDA study*, 53.

<sup>30</sup>Snowden, *The Co-operative Movement in Newfoundland: an ARDA study*, 132.

<sup>31</sup>Wendy Quarry, "The Fogo Process: an experiment in participatory communication" (Unpublished MA thesis, University of Guelph, 1994), 7.

<sup>32</sup>Quarry, "The Fogo Process," 8-9.

<sup>33</sup>Quarry, "The Fogo Process," 10.

<sup>34</sup>"Fogo Island Film and Community Development Project, Submitted by Bill Nemtin and Colin Low" (in NFB Archives, file # 4335 A-94, "Planning and Research Div."), 2-3.

<sup>35</sup>Joseph R. Smallwood, cited in Patrick O'Flaherty, *The Rock Observed: studies in the literature of Newfoundland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 162. O'Flaherty's footnote for this quotation says, "Smallwood acknowledges having applied this common tag to Newfoundland, and many writers attribute it to him."

<sup>36</sup>This transitional period is discussed at length in Raymond B. Blake, *Canadians at Last: Canada integrates Newfoundland as a province* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

<sup>37</sup>Among many others, see Miriam Wright, *A Fishery for Modern Times: the state and the industrialization of the Newfoundland fishery, 1934-1968* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2001), 122.

<sup>38</sup>This number combines estimates for the centralization and resettlement programs from 1954 to 1970. Source: Melanie Martin, "Centralization," Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Website, 2006 <<http://www.heritage.nf.ca/law/centralization.html>>, and Martin, "The Resettlement Program," Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Website, 2006 <<http://www.heritage.nf.ca/law/resprogram.html>>

<sup>39</sup>For one reference to this belief on Fogo Island, see Robert L. DeWitt, *Public Policy and Community Protest: The Fogo Case* (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1969), 84-85.

<sup>40</sup>Valdemar Horsdal (Valdy), "Arnold's Cove Ladies," *Landscapes* (Vancouver: Haida Records, 1973). This popular song of the time, by the Canadian singer Valdy, imagined the lives of "the sons and the daughters of the ladies and men/ Who left 'neath the government order" and describes resettlement as "the well-intentioned plan of the government man/ And one must not deny one's own leader."

There are many references to the belief in forced resettlement, including the Martin articles cited above.

<sup>41</sup>Sources here include several sections of the Fogo Island films, particularly *An Introduction to Fogo* and *Andrew Britt at Shoal Bay*, and DeWitt, *Public Policy and Community Protest*, 1-12.

<sup>42</sup>"Closing down plant at Fogo Island," *Atlantic Fisherman & Shipping Review*, June 1967, 18.

<sup>43</sup>Colin Low (director), *An Introduction to Fogo* (National Film Board of Canada, 1968).

<sup>44</sup>DeWitt, *Public Policy and Community Protest*, 50-51.

<sup>45</sup>DeWitt, *Public Policy and Community Protest*, 2.

<sup>46</sup>The myth that resettlement involved forced evacuations permeates the lore of the period. Marchessault, Watson, and others — including the current NFB website — cite a government 'plan' for evacuation as part of the reason for the films, and the cancellation of

the 'plan' as evidence of the films' success. Among her extensive writings on film and video, Dorothy Todd Henaut gets both the genesis of the project and the government's policy wrong when she describes the films happening almost by accident, after "Colin Low had been invited to Newfoundland to make a film about how nice it would be for the people of Fogo Island to be relocated to a 'development town'." (Dorothy Todd Henaut, "Video Stories from the Dawn of Time," *Visual Anthropology Review* 7, 2 (Fall 1991), 85.

Depending on the period, between 75% and 100% of the households in a community were required to petition for resettlement before an entire community qualified for government support. Individuals could petition, but all government funding depended on moving to an approved 'growth centre,' and many people left for mainland Canada on their own. As their neighbours left and the province withdrew or declined to provide services, many people who wanted to stay in their home communities felt they were indeed being forced out, but the letter of the law, at least, did not allow for involuntary resettlement.

<sup>47</sup>Unknown author, "Report M-1: Mini-area plan for Fogo Island, Department of Community & Social Development", September 1967. J.R. Smallwood papers, Memorial University Centre for Newfoundland Studies, file reference 3.21.032.

<sup>48</sup>DeWitt, *Public Policy and Community Protest*, 24. The files of J.R. Smallwood and Fred Earle include a number of letters from various communities around Fogo Island, inquiring about resettlement.

<sup>49</sup>DeWitt, *Public Policy and Community Protest*, 45.

<sup>50</sup>DeWitt, *Public Policy and Community Protest*, 13.

<sup>51</sup>DeWitt, *Public Policy and Community Protest*, 21.

<sup>52</sup>DeWitt, *Public Policy and Community Protest*, 21.

<sup>53</sup>DeWitt, *Public Policy and Community Protest*, 53.

<sup>54</sup>Rick Hayes, "Fred Earle: a lifetime of service to Newfoundland," *The Newfoundland Herald* (8 August 1981), 14. Fred and Brian Earle's comfortable relationship with each other is apparent as they recall school days in the film *Brian Earle on Merchants and Fishing*. There is no reference to the fact that they are related, but it would have been common knowledge on Fogo Island at the time.

<sup>55</sup>Meeting minutes, 3 April 1964, Memorial University of Newfoundland Extension Service Working Committee on Fisheries, 3 April 1964. (Papers of Fred Earle, filename: Extension Service).

<sup>56</sup>From letters to Charlie Hart and Titus Jones, 6 November 1964 (Papers of Fred Earle, file name: Fogo). Nine days later Earle wrote these men and others, saying the conference would have to be delayed until government people were available. It is unclear when or if this particular conference finally took place; the plan may have been the genesis of the 1967 conference referred to repeatedly in the Fogo Island films.

<sup>57</sup>Letter to Dan Roberts, 30 July 1964. (Papers of Fred Earle, filename: Change Islands)

<sup>58</sup>Letter to Dan Roberts, 24 November 1964. (Papers of Fred Earle, filename: Change Islands)

<sup>59</sup>Letter to Dan Roberts, 6 July 1966. (Papers of Fred Earle, filename: Change Islands)

<sup>60</sup>Like most of Newfoundland, settlements on Fogo Island had grown up along the coast, around sheltered harbours and close to fishing grounds. As roads were built, the 'middle of nowhere' was accessible and free of the baggage of community and denominational

loyalties. Isolated in 1967, the motel's example led to other buildings serving all the island's communities being located there.

<sup>61</sup>Recorded comments of Don Snowden, ca.1965-67, exact date and location unknown, "Fogo History Part II," tape 01388 Extension Services Tapes collection, Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University Library.

<sup>62</sup>Manson H. Sheppard, "A Brief History of the Fogo Island Building and Producer's (sic) Cooperative: A report submitted to Dr. WDW Nowak," unpublished paper, March 1972, on file at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University Queen Elizabeth II Library, 6.

<sup>63</sup>Henry Mintzberg and Alexandra McHugh, "Strategy Formation in an Adhocracy," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 30, 2 (June 1985), 160-161.

<sup>64</sup>Mintzberg and McHugh, 164.

<sup>65</sup>Hayes, "Fred Earle: a lifetime of service to Newfoundland," 15.

<sup>66</sup>Evans, *In the National Interest*, 164.

<sup>67</sup>Evans, *In the National Interest*, 164.

<sup>68</sup>Jones, *Movies and Memoranda*, 162.

<sup>69</sup>Bill Nemtin and Colin Low, "Fogo Island Film and Development Project," National Film Board archives, File #4335, A-96, "Fogo Island Project," (no date, early 1968), 5. There are several versions of this report, likely circulated among the members of the production team. What appears to be a draft version is also found in the files of Fred Earle.

<sup>70</sup>Colin Low, dir., *The Specialists at Memorial Discuss the Fogo Films* (National Film Board of Canada, 1967).

<sup>71</sup>De Witt, *Public Policy and Community Protest*, 84-85.

<sup>72</sup>I am grateful to a number of people, including Dan Roberts and Don Best on Fogo Island, and Randy Coffin and Dr. Philip Warren in St. John's for their help in identifying many of the people who appear in the films.

<sup>73</sup>If the project had happened even a year later, it probably would have been shot on video. Sony introduced the first Porta-pak portable video camera kits in 1968.

<sup>74</sup>Nemtin and Low report, "Fogo Island Film and Development Project," 8.

<sup>75</sup>Undated NFB report on the Newfoundland Project (NFB Archives, Box 253-31 File-name: "Fogo Island Project 1967-72, [10/13]), 2.

<sup>76</sup>Colin Low, untitled report on Fogo Island films (National Archives of Canada, Colin Low fonds, Box 253-28 file 7 of 13), 9.

<sup>77</sup>Bill Nemtin, handwritten screening notes (NAC, Colin Low fonds, Box 253-29), n.p.

<sup>78</sup>Nemtin, screening notes, n.p.

<sup>79</sup>Colin Low, untitled report on Fogo Island films NAC, Colin Low fonds, Box 253-28 file 7 of 13), 8.

<sup>80</sup>Undated NFB report on the Newfoundland Project (NFB Archives, Box 253-31 File-name: "Fogo Island Project 1967-72, [10/13]), 2.

<sup>81</sup>Quarry, *The Fogo Process*, 14.

<sup>82</sup>Quarry, *The Fogo Process*, 14.

<sup>83</sup>Maloney appears in *Citizen Discussions* and *Fishermen's Meeting*, but it is obvious that both segments were recorded in the same sitting. It is also clear that Don Snowden's voice has been relaid over the original interviewer's, but I have found no explanation for this.

<sup>84</sup>Quarry, *The Fogo Process*, 15. In *Cinema as Catalyst: film, video-tape and social change*, (St. John's: Memorial University Extension Service, 1972), Sandra Gwyn corroborates this story, told to Quarry by Donald Snowden, but relates it less specifically than Quarry does. She says that "there was ... considerable doubt as to how the Newfoundland Government would react to this unprecedented exercise in participatory democracy" (5-6), without mentioning Taylor or Smallwood by name, though she does say that Richard Gwyn's familiarity with Smallwood was the reason "Snowden sought his advice." None of the NFB-focused histories mentions it at all, suggesting only that recording a government response was all part of the plan (Jones, *Movies and Memoranda*, 163), or that the fisheries department filmed its own response (Evans, *In the National Interest*, 164). Watson says the filmmakers discussed with the Fogo Islanders whether the films should be shown to government officials (Watson, "Challenge for Change," 114).

<sup>85</sup>Don Snowden, 1983, quoted in the editors' introduction to Donald Snowden, "Eyes see, ears hear," *SD Dimensions* (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, Sustainable Development Department), posted July 1999 at <http://www.fao.org/WAICENT/FAOINFO/SUSTDEV/CDdirect/CDre0038.htm>

<sup>86</sup>The NFB website still asserts that "after seeing the (Fogo Island) films, officials scrapped the relocation plan and helped in the creation of a co-operative." (Filmmaker in Residence, "Challenge for Change," <http://www.nfb.ca/filmmakerinresidence>. Downloaded 21 June, 2009.

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