

Industrial Restructuring and the Gender Implications of Public Policy: The Case of the Newfoundland Groundfishery Collapse

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INTRODUCTION

THE NORTHERN COD MORATORIUM of 1992 in the Atlantic basin caused the largest industrial displacement of labour in Canadian history, bringing the groundfishery, the mainstay of the Newfoundland economy for centuries, to a close. Already accused of mismanagement related to earlier stock collapses, and now confronted with ever more compelling evidence that “too many people are still chasing too few fish,” the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) turned its attention to downsizing the fishing industry in the Atlantic region.¹ The Northern Cod Adjustment and Recovery Program (NCARP) and The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (TAGS) were intended to meet this objective of industry restructuring once and for all, and thereby lay the groundwork for what in local parlance has become known as “the fishery of the future.” NCARP (1992-1994) and TAGS (1994-1999) were two of the largest adjustment programmes ever employed by the federal government to provide emergency assistance and restructuring options to those adversely affected by the vagaries of the Canadian natural resource economy. Billions of dollars were spent in the hope of reducing the historic dependency on the groundfishery in Atlantic Canada, and particularly Newfoundland and Labrador.² The main purpose was to provide those with a demonstrated attachment to the fishery with the financial means and retraining necessary to obtain alternative employment.

The purpose of this paper is to address the gender-specific implications for fisheries workers of the closures that followed the moratoriums, in the context of the government’s stated policy objectives. This issue is important for at least two

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reasons. First, the changes that ripped through the Newfoundland labour market as the fisheries closed were threatening for most fisheries workers, especially women, whose opportunity cost of labour was low due to very limited alternative employment prospects. Second, the northern cod (*Gadus morhua*) collapse may not be the last of its kind. Current diversification strategies have focused on high-priced species such as crab, shrimp and lobster, and may not only hamper the return of the northern cod but could potentially suffer the same fate. In light of the experiences of the past decade, if the prospect of future stock collapses does not concentrate the minds of Canada's fisheries managers it is difficult to imagine what will. This points to perhaps the most important lesson of all: that social science research must be allowed to inform public policy in a manner not seen during the recent crises.

Our concern here is whether the adjustment policies exhibited a gender bias against women — was it the case that the so-called adjustment programmes (NCARP and TAGS) were not gender neutral, but left women as a group *relatively* worse off than men? The issue is not whether the policy outcomes affected women and men differently. They did. The issue is whether the policy measures treated women sufficiently differently, recognizing that women's (traditional) role in the Newfoundland fishery meant that their needs and prospects were not necessarily the same as those of men. If they did not, did this amount to discrimination against women?

The adjustment programmes have been criticized for failing to meet women's expectations, in that they did not take account of the greater vulnerability of women in the face of the labour market transformations (mainly in the demand for plant workers) caused by the closure of the groundfishery. While the closures obviously disadvantaged both men and women, it is widely held that the differential impacts disadvantaged women, especially those who had worked in the processing sector. To address the question of whether the differential policy outcomes for men and women can be said to exhibit a gender bias, we relate anecdotal evidence to the statistical evidence, aiming to uncover the *source* of the differential outcomes. Our fundamental premise is that the government's purpose was to achieve specific adjustment objectives within the confines of the labour market as it existed in the fishery prior to 1992, and to mitigate hardship caused by the groundfish crisis by providing temporary financial assistance. The government did not intend to redress the balance between men and women by a comprehensive or permanent recasting of labour market policy in the province. This proviso is important since it lies at the root of much of the public dissatisfaction with the programmes.

The tendency in much of the literature dealing with gender issues has been to assume that differential treatment and outcomes stem from an inherent gender bias. The present analysis is part of a broader re-examination of those aspects of the programmes that had direct gender implications. It is our main contention that although the two programmes exhibited shortcomings from a gender equity perspective, the public policy response rested on firmer ground than generally recognized. This is all the more noteworthy since officials were singularly unprepared for the

crisis despite ample warnings from the scientific community about the state of the cod stocks, and despite the amount of research which clearly indicated the need for greater gender sensitivity in fisheries policy design.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. The next section reviews the literature. Section two sketches the origins of the gender division of labour in the Newfoundland fishery, followed in section three by a discussion of the gender characteristics of the modern fisheries workforce. Section four presents the quantitative and qualitative evidence used to examine the gender-specific impacts of the public policy response; and section five summarizes and concludes.

I. PREVIOUS STUDIES

At the time of the 1992 moratorium the provincial population stood at about 581,000. Women made up 32 percent of the labour force in the fishery; ten percent were fishers and 54 percent plant workers (Census of Canada, 1991). Despite the high proportion of females, neither NCARP nor TAGS can be said to have been designed with a view to the adjustment needs of female processing workers. The first response programme, NCARP, included all fish harvesters, plant workers and trawlers who relied on the northern cod fishery³ or who had a historical dependency on the fishery for their livelihood (Government of Canada, 1992). Thousands of individuals and families in hundreds of communities were affected in eastern and northeastern Newfoundland, coastal Labrador and the lower north shore of Quebec by the 1992 closures.⁴ NCARP attempted to reduce the number of fishers by 33 percent and plant workers by 50 percent. It was designed to assist 19,000 fishers but served in the end 26,569, of whom 36 percent were women. The cost was \$587 million, an average of about \$22,200 per client.⁵

More fisheries closures followed in 1994, when the second moratorium was imposed, covering most groundfish stocks in the Atlantic region. The second response programme, TAGS, applied to the entire region and included clients from all four Atlantic provinces and Quebec. Nearly 70 percent were from Newfoundland and Labrador (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1997). TAGS aimed to reduce the fishery labour force in Atlantic Canada by no less than 50 percent. Designed to serve 30,000 people, 52,000 applied; 40,025 were eligible, of whom 27,858 or 70 percent came from Newfoundland and Labrador. As with NCARP, a larger client population than expected was not reflected in an increased budget. TAGS cost \$1.9 billion, or about \$47,500 per client on average over the life of the programme (HRDC, 1998a). The total cost to taxpayers of the two adjustment programmes was thus almost \$2.5 billion, or about \$37,400 per client. Based on the size of the combined clientele of NCARP and TAGS in Newfoundland and Labrador, more than 54,500 individuals and their dependents were directly affected by the fishery closures between 1992 and 1999. Thousands more were affected indirectly.

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It is indisputable that NCARP and TAGS reduced the economic misfortune resulting from the groundfish moratoriums. But the extent to which these programmes met the stated objectives are a matter of contention.⁶

It has been argued that the federal government was caught off guard by each of the moratoria it had to impose (e.g., Savoie, 1994). As a result, there was very little time to design programs that recognized gender-specific needs. One year prior to the moratorium the provincial Women's Policy Office commissioned a study of the effects of the gathering fishery crisis on women working in the industry (Rowe, 1991). The most important finding was the lack of awareness and concern in government departments about the differential impact on women. Many departments simply could not respond to a request for information on women, and silence was a common response to inquiries. When politicians responded to questions, they routinely suggested that the programmes did not make distinctions between individuals. This response ignored traditional occupational segregation and women's responsibility for the home, which meant that men and women would be affected differently by the changes in their working lives: men were more likely than women to have skills that were readily transferable to occupations outside the fishery (Rowe, 1991).

Also well in advance of the moratorium were two reports completed for the Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment (Anger et al., 1986; Kealey, 1986). Both studies argued that women's domestic responsibilities remained a major structural barrier, which enhanced inequalities in the labour force. Since sex-role stereotypes steered women towards a limited variety of educational options, they needed to be actively encouraged to enter non-traditional programmes. This required alternative career options, and guidance that recognized the different needs of women in the areas of education, vocational training and retraining, such as access to adequate day care facilities (Kealey, 1986).⁷ Anger et al. (1986) also observed high concentrations of women in traditional female jobs such as home-making, child care work, administrative assistance, and temporary office help — jobs characterized by low wages, low status, and a lack of opportunity for advancement. Evidently, the matter did not attract much attention until 1993 when Immigration Canada and the provincial Department of Education and Employment jointly investigated the issue of identifying job prospects. The resulting document, *Prospects '93*, played a key role in acquainting NCARP counsellors with labour market prospects for occupations related to community college and private school course offerings (Newell, 1993).

Several studies have attempted to evaluate NCARP and TAGS in a comprehensive manner.⁸ The Final Evaluation of NCARP (Gardner Pinfold, 1994) commissioned by DFO observed that while the income replacement component worked as intended, NCARP could only reduce direct dependency on the northern cod fishery in two ways: fixed gear groundfish licence retirement, and the early retirement of fishers and plant workers. NCARP also indirectly encouraged people to leave the

fishery by providing basic adult training and job skills for work in other sectors. But there were two barriers to effective training: the advanced age of the fishery workforce (53 percent were 40 years of age or older), and the low level of formal education (68 percent had not graduated from high school). The combined effect of these factors meant that training had to focus on basic literacy and numeracy, and academic upgrading, rather than on job-specific skills (HRDC, 1996a).

Another independent evaluation (Savoie, 1994) focused on the “lessons learned” from NCARP, of which three are relevant here. First, adjustment would take time (whether at the level of the individual or the community). Second, the relevant levels of governments should inform the target groups that most of them would no longer be employed in the groundfish industry if and when the cod stocks recovered. Third, a condition for the renewal of the groundfishery was the ending of turf battles between different departments and levels of government, thereby allowing the cooperation and coordination of policies that even our own research indicates were lacking throughout the crisis (HRDC, 1998a). The defensive attitude of the parties involved continues to make it difficult to come to grips with the failings of the policy response, and in particular to find out why the same lessons have to be learned over and over again.

Neither Gardner Pinfold nor Savoie considered gender issues related explicitly to NCARP. This lends some support to the claim that women’s role in the Newfoundland fishery has been neglected in scholarly research (Wright, 1995). However, a gender-oriented study relating to TAGS was sponsored by the Department of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC, 1996b). Its purpose was to determine the responses to the fishery crisis of affected households, and to analyze the differential impact of TAGS on women and men. A case study of five communities showed that in most families the woman did all or most of the unpaid domestic work and child care. The man did the “outside” work for pay. Given this traditional division of responsibilities, women faced additional challenges in adjusting to the groundfish shutdown. In particular, they needed more support to help with family responsibilities while they completed training. The lack of such support meant that in practice training programs were inaccessible to women, who were restricted in their ability to relocate.

In apparent ignorance of previous research, another report on the effectiveness of TAGS discovered that the client population presented officials with the “enormous and unique” challenges posed by aging workers with low levels of education living in areas with high rates of unemployment (HRDC, 1998b). The same point had been made by Gardner Pinfold (1994), Savoie (1994), and others. In fairness, the difficulties of implementing counselling and training programs, employment support and local economic development programs, and income support under these circumstances should not be underestimated. HRDC eventually came to the view that the majority of TAGS clients could not be permanently “adjusted out” of the groundfish industry given the available financial resources and the short (six-year)

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duration of the programme.⁹ A principal reason was that adjustment was “a household process.” Clients had to take family circumstances into consideration before making decisions regarding their adjustment needs; and while women expressed more positive views towards adjustment than men, perhaps because they often had higher levels of formal education (a critical factor according to HRDC), their choices tended to be more constrained by family and community ties, and by cultural values.

HRDC concluded that the overall adjustment target for the TAGS program was being reached but noted, ominously, that if and when the groundfishery returned, the persistent problem of excess labour supply would reappear.¹⁰ HRDC also thought that the failure of the provincial government to designate the plants that would survive as part of a recovering fishery had weakened women’s stake in the fishery. The selection of the plants (read “communities”) that would be closed formed part of the initial undertaking by the provincial government. Not surprisingly, it later stated its preference for a private sector solution to this thorny problem (HRDC, 1998a).¹¹

TAGS was in essence an extension of NCARP. It might be assumed, then, that the officials developing TAGS would have been keenly aware of the challenges faced by NCARP clients, and would have been in a position to at least mitigate the barriers identified in the NCARP evaluations. The evidence does not support this assumption. On the contrary, there seems to have been astonishingly little learned from NCARP, and even less from the research which predated both adjustment programmes. There is ample support for this disconcerting view. Furthermore, many of the findings and lessons in these earlier studies could have been anticipated well in advance of the groundfish moratorium in 1992. This is particularly true for many gender-related issues, and the research *predating* the moratorium that called for gender sensitivity in government adjustment seems to have gone largely unnoticed.

Gender sensitivity in the design of human resource policy in the fishery cannot be taken for granted, despite the integral role played by women in the Newfoundland groundfishery since its earliest days, and despite the ample research documenting the situation of women (nonstandard workers in particular) in the Canadian labour market. Arguably, the adjustment problems faced by women derived in large part from the traditional gender division of labour which exists in most households in the province. As the modern labour force in the fishery emerged, it assumed this gender division in the tasks on sea as well as on shore.

II. THE TRADITIONAL GENDER DIVISION OF LABOUR

The traditional inshore fishery maintained a *de facto* gender division of labour. The men were responsible for the dangerous work on the sea, while the women were responsible for a demanding array of tasks on shore. The work-related tasks of both

men and women were very different but equally important to the proper functioning of the family as a whole — a textbook example of the theory of household production, which takes account of both paid and unpaid work.

As the cod trap fishing enterprise was very labour intensive, it helped to have a large network of kinship ties to operate efficiently. Fishing with a cod trap usually involved about five or six men, who were often related in some way (Faris, 1973). Due to the large amount of fish caught, the men depended on the women to take responsibility for the operation on shore. In addition to other household tasks, the women were expected to cure and dry the catch during the height of the summer trap fishery.

The men were responsible for harvesting, and during the summer months thousands of pounds of fish would be hauled daily. Men would do their share of the gardening, usually the digging (Porter, 1985), and in the fall they would help with gathering the crops and then lift the heavy bags of vegetables into the cellar (Williams, 1996). In the winter, usually after the first snowfall, the men would begin harvesting wood. At times, especially if the fishing season had been poor, some men would spend the winter working in the lumber camps. Many chose to gamble on the dangers of the seal fishery to supplement their meagre incomes in a bad year. Winter was also a time for repairing damaged fishing gear, and hunting for food and skins (Faris, 1973).

The woman was responsible for ensuring that her family was healthy and well fed. This included the care of livestock. Women knew the folk remedies for common ailments, and real medical skills were found among those who were practising midwives. Gardening was another of their duties. They cleared the ground of rocks, planted, weeded, harvested, grew seed,¹² and protected the garden against intruding animals. Berry picking typically included the entire family, but women would sell the berries and with this “berry money” purchase winter supplies. This was a significant cash contribution to the family finances, which women commonly managed (Murray, 1979; Porter, 1985). Cooking and bread-making (in which most women took great pride) were chores for which women had sole responsibility. During the winter most families had four meals per day. In the summer this would increase to at least seven or eight (Porter, 1985). Small families baked bread at least once per day, while larger families required two bakings (Antler, 1977). These non-market activities obviously contributed substantially to living standards although they were not included in income and production statistics.¹³ But it is obvious that women played an essential role in the survival of their families. However, what made these women remarkable was that, as Porter observed, they found the time to work on the flakes.

The real boundary between the worlds of men and women was the “shoreline or landwash.” Their work on the flakes became an area in which women developed tremendous skills and expertise. The authority on the flakes was the skipper’s wife, who was often referred to as the “skipper of the shore crew.” She was essentially in charge of the whole process, including the hiring, firing, and supervision of labour.

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The fish was processed along an assembly line. The "cutthroat" began the operation, the "header" removed the head and guts, and the "splitter" removed the backbone. The fish was then washed, salted, and carried to the flakes to be stacked and dried. The process called for exact timing and experience. The fish had to have the proper amount of salt, they could not be stacked too high, and one needed to be confident in predicting the weather as rain and moisture would spoil the fish (Porter, 1985).

The inshore fishery has been eroding since 1949 (Antler, 1977). The end of World War II brought improvements in marine technology such as sonar, and larger vessels. Successive governments promoted industrialization in the fishery and the small family fishing enterprise slowly came to an end. Large processing firms were interested in a completely industrialized fishery. Household production, which characterized the inshore fishery, did not fit in. And women were not seen by government to have much of a role to play in the industrialized fishery (Wright, 1995). Indeed, the period 1957-1965 saw an effort by the provincial government and the large processing companies to bring an end to the traditional inshore fishery. This took the form of resettlement programmes, intended to move families from small fishing communities to more central locations where employment was available with offshore or midshore fleets, or in other sectors of the economy. Since fishers could now sell their catch to the large processing plants for cash instead of selling it to the local merchant, women's work on the flakes disappeared. But women found their way into this "new" fishery, and became a source of inexpensive yet experienced labour for the large processors (Antler, 1977).

To this day, the division of domestic as well as paid labour in the Newfoundland fishery remains strongly gendered.¹⁴ The working lives of men and women continue to follow different patterns because they remain subject to different social and economic constraints. This implies that men and women have different needs as they adjust to the disappearance of their traditional occupations. This in turn raises the question whether the differential treatment of men and women in the government's response to the fisheries crises reflected the needs of women, or if it was as disadvantageous to women as often alleged.¹⁵

III. GENDER CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MODERN LABOUR FORCE

Participation rates and demographics

Although women in Canada have achieved numerical equality with men in paid employment, the terms on which they participate in the labour force remain unequal.¹⁶ It is well known that the pattern of labour force participation of women is distinct from that of men, in that it is determined by their age, the age of their children, their civil status, the employment status of their spouse, and their educational

and occupational qualifications.¹⁷ In particular, women's participation in paid employment tends to be interrupted by domestic responsibilities, which can disadvantage women if it undermines their economic independence. Their dual responsibilities make women more inclined to accept part-time work. In turn this can affect negatively the conditions of employment, pay, career prospects and the related opportunity cost of unpaid work.

The nonstandard (part-time and non-permanent) work arrangements of many workers in the Newfoundland fishery can thus cause hardships that affect men and women differently. Given that women are over-represented in such work arrangements, where the relative level of security tends to be lower than in other forms of employment, the gender dimension merits particular attention (Lipsett and Reesor, 1999). If women were expected to participate in the adjustment effort on terms comparable to those of men, then policy instruments should have included compensatory measures to ensure reasonably gender neutral outcomes. That is, the policy instruments would have to consider the dual responsibilities of women for the home and outside work. This would be shown in the conditions of access to assistance, the modes of day care provision, the treatment of appeals, and more generally in the types of adjustment options made available to displaced workers. It has been argued that lack of attention to these factors left women more vulnerable than men to the effects of the crisis (Rowe, 1991).¹⁸

Women in 1999 still made up more than half of the workforce in fish plants, where they mainly occupied direct processing jobs such as trimming and packing. Men tended to do the indirect jobs such as maintenance, heavy equipment operation, and management/supervision.¹⁹ This employment pattern, confirmed by interviews with plant workers, excluded women from the better-paying plant jobs²⁰: there were no forewomen in any processing industry in Newfoundland in 1985 (Table 1). Given this apparent *de facto* occupational segregation, and the large number of workers in nonstandard work arrangements, it is important to understand that the level of security varies between employment forms, and thus affects the needs of different groups of displaced workers.²¹ In this regard, womens' needs are heavily influenced by the traditional expectation that they put the interest of the family first.²²

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Table 1. Weeks Worked in 1985^a, by Occupation and Gender, Newfoundland and Labrador

Occupation:	1-26 weeks		27-48 weeks		49-52 weeks	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Fishers	9,325	735	1,770	20	515	5
Plant workers	2,295	3,280	985	675	360	165
Foremen/women ^b	170	-	115	-	225	-

Notes: ^aShows who worked since January 1, 1985, mostly full-time, persons 15 years +.

^bAn aggregation of food, beverage & related processing occupations.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 1986.

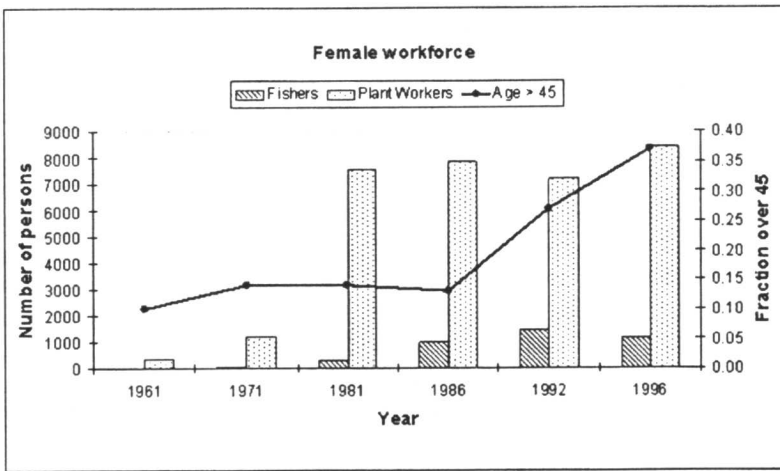


Figure 1a. Number of Female Fishers and Plant Workers; and the Proportion of Workers Aged 45+, 1961-96²³

Female participation in the fishery expanded strongly from the 1970s until about the time of the first groundfish moratorium (Figure 1a). While the increase in the numbers employed in processing was dramatic in absolute terms, the increase (in percentage terms) in the number of female fishers was also impressive. By 1996, female employment in fish plants had dropped back to the level of the 1970s. Male employment in both sectors also increased with the growth in the fishery during the 1970s, albeit somewhat less dramatically. It is noteworthy that male employment in processing started to decline in the late 1980s when the groundfish stocks began to show signs of serious stress (Figure 1b). For many women working in fish plants,

the declining harvests meant fewer weeks of work and lower Unemployment Insurance (UI) payments (Rowe, 1991). As will be shown below, this affected dramatically who would qualify when for early retirement under the provisions of the adjustment programme, since the applicant's labour force participation in the years preceding the moratorium was key to establishing eligibility.

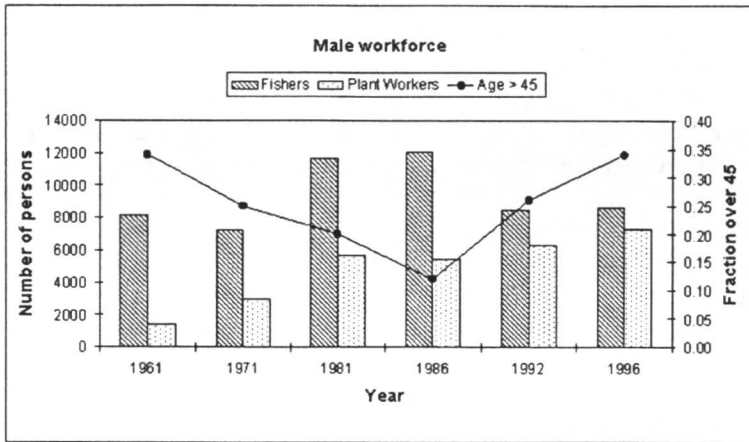


Figure 1b. Number of Male Fishers and Plant Workers; and the Proportion of Workers Aged 45+, 1961-96²⁴

The demographics behind the patterns of labour force participation also led to differential outcomes. During the period 1961-1996 the average age of male fishers and plant workers remained unchanged at about 33 and 39 years respectively. By contrast, the average age of women increased steadily from 32 to 42 years for fishers, and from 25 to 39 years for plant workers. This confirms independent observations that “the workforce is aging partly because the younger generation sees no future in fish processing.”²⁵ A further indication of the aging of the workforce is the growth of the cohort aged 45 years and older. The trend in both female and male employment (Figures 2a, b) shows rapid aging of the workforce since the major groundfish closures. Prior to the closures, the proportion of females aged over 45 had not changed much since the 1960s, whereas the number of men in the same cohort fell steadily until the late 1980s. The trend break at this time is a clear indication of the change in recruitment to the labour force; younger generations are turning away from the fishery, and many evidently leave. It is noteworthy that the female workforce has aged faster than the male workforce since the mid-1980s. Nonetheless, women found it difficult to qualify for early retirement under the adjustment programmes. The reasons for this are discussed below.

Educational attainment

Census data on the educational attainment of fishery workers in Newfoundland and Labrador has been available since 1961. Though there has been a gradual improvement, the data presents a clear picture of a poorly educated workforce (Table 2). The most important improvement has been the sharp drop in the proportion of males and females with less than a grade nine education. But there are noteworthy differences between occupations and gender. Plant workers tend to be somewhat better educated than fishers at all levels, and there are more men than women with less than a grade nine education. There are, then, more women than men at most educational levels beyond grade nine. This supports the observation by Williams (1996) that women were more likely than men to participate in university-based training programmes. The downside to all of this is pointed out by FishNet (undated): even if parents support their sons and daughters equally in getting a post-secondary education, young women are disadvantaged by the more limited training options and lower-paying jobs available to them, gender-biased job creation projects, abusive relationships, and high rates of teenage pregnancy.

The state of education in the fishery was a concern under both NCARP and TAGS, and some effort was made to improve the situation under these programmes. Gardner Pinfold (1994) argued that training under NCARP was hindered by the low levels of formal education. Sixty-eight percent had not graduated from high school. Perhaps as a result, HRDC funded 16 adult basic education centres run by the Fishermen, Food and Allied Workers' Union (FFAW) from 1992 to 1996.²⁶ Despite the positive effect this may have had on those who enrolled, the general situation was no better in 1998 when HRDC (1998a) reported that 72 percent of the target group lacked a high school diploma, and acknowledged that this factor still constituted a major barrier to further education and training achievements.

As noted above, the greatest improvement in schooling occurred in the 'less than grade nine' category (Table 2). However, this trend was evident well before 1992. It is therefore doubtful if any of this improvement is attributable to the training efforts under NCARP. In contrast, TAGS appears to have helped a substantial number of clients complete high school, and obtain at least some secondary education (Table 3). The improvement in secondary schooling undoubtedly built confidence, and enhanced clients' ability to deal effectively with the outside world. But in practice this did precious little to move workers out of the fishery.

Income differentials

Three features of the trends in annual income²⁷ by gender for fishers and plant workers deserve mention. First, it is clear that females have had significantly lower average real (inflation adjusted) incomes than their male counterparts since at least the early 1960s (Figure 2). Second, the discrepancy in average pay between men and women has increased over time, as the average income of men has grown faster

than that of women. Third, since the 1992 moratorium the incomes of both female and male fishers have grown sharply in percentage terms, but relatively more so for men. At the same time, the pay of all plant workers has fallen in real terms. Male plant workers still earn more on average than females per annum due to differences in participation rates (see Table 1), but both sexes earned less in real terms in 1996 than they did in 1981. These recent developments are directly attributable to the groundfish moratoria: lower groundfish harvests have reduced the demand for plant workers (mostly women), and the drive to rapidly diversify the fishery by exploiting higher valued species such as shrimp and snow crab have combined to increase the average income of a smaller number of remaining fishers (mostly men). It is evident that the trends in income by occupation exhibit a gendered effect.²⁸ For plant workers this is manifest in a difference in the *levels* of income. Until the early 1990s, the amount by which male incomes exceeded female incomes remained more or less unchanged. Since the moratorium the gap has been closing as the real income of males has fallen faster than that of females. According to an industry representative, plant workers can barely survive on their current earnings.²⁹ A remarkably different scenario is evident for fishers. While male average incomes are again substantially higher than female incomes, they are not trending together. The difference in growth rates, hardly noticeable in the 1960s, increased sharply in the 1970s. Since that time the average income of male fishers has continued to grow considerably faster than that of female fishers. In sum, the real income of fishers is up since the moratorium, while that of plant workers is down. This has affected women disproportionately since they are over-represented among plant workers and under-represented among fishers. The pre-moratoria earnings of female fisheries workers reflected their lower labour force participation rates and hence hours worked. The question of interest here is whether the income support programmes under NCARP and TAGS contributed to the relative deterioration of the income position of women. Wright (1995), for example, calls for an uncovering of the ways in which the state has been involved in perpetuating gender inequality through its institutions. This issue is addressed below.

Table 2. Proportion of Fishers and Plant Workers by Highest Level of Schooling, Newfoundland and Labrador (percent), 1961-96

		<i>Less than grade 9</i>	<i>Grades 9-13, no diploma</i>	<i>Grades 9-13, with diploma</i>	<i>Some University</i>	<i>University Degree</i>
<u>Fishers</u>						
1961:	Males	83	15	1.1	-	-
	Females	69	25	6	-	-
1971:	Males	78	17	3.6	0.97	0.07
	Females	72	24	2.6	1.6	0.24
1981:	Males	59	26	9.5	4.7	0.23
	Females	45	40	13	1.6	-
1996 ^a :		37.5	42	14	5.6	1.9
<u>Plant workers</u>						
1961:	Males	75.3	23	1.5	-	0.072
	Females	66	33	1.4	-	-
1971:	Males	64.5	25	9.2	1.3	0.17
	Females	75	17	6	1.4	1.4
1981:	Males	48	32	14	5.6	0.099
	Females	41	41	15	3.4	0.071
1996 ^a :		32	44	16	5.8	1.5

Note: ^aData by gender not available

Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada, Census data. Data for 1991 n/a.

Table 3. Educational Attainment Levels of TAGS Clients before and after TAGS-Sponsored Education and Training Programmes^a, 1994-97

<i>Educational Attainment:</i>	<i>Upon Entry to TAGS</i>		<i>After TAGS Training^b</i>	
	<i>%</i>	<i>Cumulative %</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Cumulative %</i>
0-8 Years	41.1	41.1	36.7	36.7
Some Secondary	29.0	70.1	25.9	62.6
High School Completion	19.2	89.3	15.5	78.1
Some Postsecondary	1.0	90.3	5.4	83.5
Postsecondary Certificate	7.7	98.0	12.0	95.5
Postsecondary Diploma	1.8	99.8	4.3	99.8
University Degree	0.2	100.0	0.2	100.0

Notes: ^aData by gender not available.

^bJuly 1997.

Source: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (1998).

IV. THE 'REALITY' OF ADJUSTMENT

The anecdotal evidence

A number of researchers and commentators have expressed serious concern that women were not given adequate opportunity to voice their concerns about their situation and training needs as the adjustment programmes were developed. However, there were attempts to obtain the comments of those who were adversely affected by the fisheries closures, and the resulting anecdotal evidence has been documented in several studies. The first of these derives from interviews funded by the Secretary of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) and conducted by the Women's Committee of the FFAW in 1994, the transition year between NCARP and TAGS. A thousand unionized and non-unionized women in 20 communities were interviewed over a ten-week period. The key findings were that 73 percent of the women had dependents, and 55 percent were interested in retraining for a new career, of whom 27 percent were prepared to consider a non-traditional occupation such as welding or mechanics. Of the women involved in training, 83 percent were enrolled in adult basic education (FFAW/CAW, 1994:22). The central recommendations called for sensitivity to the specific needs of women at the personal level, along with funding for workshops where women could develop strategies for dealing with crises that affected their communities.

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In a second effort to gather anecdotal information about the impact of the fisheries crisis on women, the FFAW organized 12 workshops in six Economic Zones. Funded by HRDC, the workshops were a "gathering of voices" and continued an initiative to seek input from women; it was spearheaded by the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The specific purpose of the workshops was to identify the impediments that prevent women from taking a more active role in shaping effective alternatives for themselves and their communities. It was found that women are often ignored in discussions regarding the financial desperation of their communities. As a result, participants were stressed, disillusioned, and hesitant to talk about the future. This was evident in attitudes reflecting a blind hope that somehow the fishery would return, that the plants would reopen, and that in the meantime government must provide assistance. In sum, there was nothing ordinary citizens could do in terms of economic development. The facilitators attributed this glum outlook to a lack of awareness, a lack of information, and a lack of self-confidence. To this add a lack of organizational skills, and it is not surprising that many women did not know where to begin to learn about the new economy and how to foster its development. While these workshops achieved little in terms of concrete outcomes, there were indications of attitude changes. Women noted that they no longer felt alone, and participating HRDC and TAGS officials expressed an improved understanding of the plight of women in fishing communities (Roberts and Robbins, 1995).

A number of other studies considered similar initiatives and related issues. Muzychka (1994) asserted that the counsellors hired by HRDC to advise fisheries workers were themselves not trained in career counselling or even general counselling. This may be one reason why women apparently had insufficient information on which to make decisions about training (Cahill and Martland, 1993), and why women continued to be trained in occupations for which there was little or no local demand. This presented women with a dilemma: they were told that they had to retrain but with no indication of what type of training had a realistic potential for employment (FFAW/CAW, 1994). Muzychka (1994:7) is not surprised that 45 percent of the women in the FFAW (1994) study were not interested in retraining since they "already have many job skills and no jobs in which to use them." More precisely, the problem was a mismatch between the skills in demand and those in supply in the communities or locations where women were willing to work. Some thought their plants would reopen and they would not leave or retrain for that reason. For those who did retrain, low self-esteem and a fear of returning to the school setting, and concern about not getting accurate information from NCARP counsellors, were seen as severe hindrances. Dissatisfaction grew among female plant workers as they began to feel that they and their skills had been ignored in the design of the adjustment programmes, and that many of them were therefore prevented from taking a more active role in retraining and in the economic development of their communities (Roberts and Robbins, 1995). Why did women who were highly productive, indus-

trial wage earners suddenly need to be “made over”? Did those responsible for adjustment policies in the fishery recognize women’s particular needs and their diversity? How did they help, hinder, or otherwise affect women’s chances of finding another job (Robinson, 1995)? Others saw a more sinister dynamic at work. Training constituted a masked subsidy to employers, and *re*-training aimed at resettlement and the abandonment of the homes and fishing enterprises that women had struggled to build.³⁰

In any event, anecdotal evidence suggests that women had greater difficulty than men had in accessing suitable retraining programs. Although women were reported to want “gender sensitive community development programs,” the research which documented in detail the requisite training needs was not acknowledged in the government’s response (FishNet, undated).³¹ But in the end it may have been more a lack of awareness of opportunities, a lack of information about procedures, and a lack of self-confidence that prevented women from taking an active role in community and economic development (Roberts and Robbins, 1995). Women were also ambivalent about their futures. *An Untidy Package* (McGee, 1997) is a videotaped interview with five women whose lives were changed by the collapse of the cod fishery. The tension between their attachments to their communities and the pressures to readjust and relocate, perhaps outside the province, is palpable. They come from a tradition of hard-working people and would prefer to work rather than receive government “hand-outs” that they feel are barely enough for survival.

This anecdotal evidence from the various sources reviewed contains certain themes, but is difficult to summarize as it will not bear any form but its own. We hazard the following as an illustration of the mounting obstacles faced by many women:

“We’re suffering for [sic] a lack of education.”

“What do you retrain for?”

“Even if we retrain, where does this leave us? I have no intention of moving.”

“Retraining is useless unless you resettle.”

“Moving — If we do that, we give up our heritage.”

The statistical evidence

Eligibility for assistance under the NCARP programme required a demonstrated long-term attachment to the groundfishery. In the case of fishers this was shown by the degree to which their income depended on northern cod. Plant workers had to have worked at specific plants that had a minimum through-put of cod. The relevant period for determining this attachment was 1987 to 1991.

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Eligible fishers, trawlermen,³² and plant workers could choose one of four adjustment options: early retirement, licence retirement, training outside the fishery, or training (professionalization) within the fishery. If none of these options was chosen clients would receive a minimum weekly payment according to a set tariff. Under the TAGS programme the procedure was somewhat different. Having first developed a career action plan with a counsellor, clients had a choice between early retirement, training inside the fishery, or training outside the fishery. The last option involved adult basic education, vocational training, skills upgrading, and employment on so-called “green projects.” Temporary adjustment assistance was available. This section attempts to draw out the gender-specific implications of the available options given some of the key characteristics of the target workforce known at the time the programmes were designed.

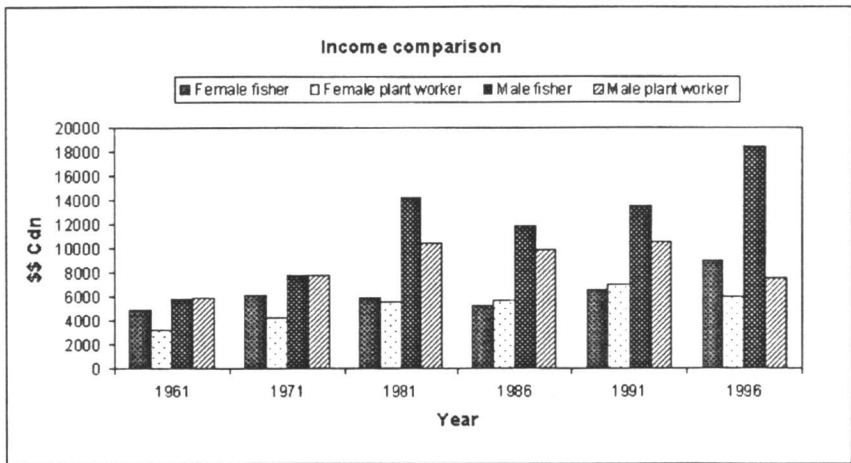


Figure 2. Average Annual Income (all sources) by Gender for Fishers and Plant Workers, Constant Dollars (1996=100), 1961-96³³

Programme Eligibility

Under TAGS the eligibility decision itself could be appealed, but not the duration of eligibility. Not only did women find it more difficult to qualify for financial compensation but the duration was also shorter than that for men — 50 percent of male but only 27 percent of female plant workers were eligible to receive benefits lasting until the end of the programme (Williams, 1996). Pre-moratorium work history determined both eligibility and the amount of compensation, and Williams argues that women were disadvantaged because they were more likely to have had interruptions in their work history as a result of family responsibilities. Moreover, women

typically held the direct processing jobs in the fish plants, which often involved night shifts (Rowe, 1991). These jobs were more likely to be scaled back or eliminated as a result of catch failure than those of male plant workers. Furthermore, plant workers, unlike fishers, could not use catch failure as an extenuating circumstance to qualify for benefits (Williams, 1996). These factors combined to produce a rather more checkered work history for women, which in turn affected the rate and duration of the benefits they received. These consequences resulted from the design of the adjustment programmes and were not unintended. Women were, correctly or not, considered to be secondary income earners in a traditional household.

However, both programmes did establish mechanisms in an attempt to ensure that all eligible clients received benefits according to the terms of reference. For example, under NCARP, any individual not deemed eligible for the licence retirement programme could request a review by a joint industry-government committee (FFAW, 1993). In some cases, women who joined their spouses fishing (because they could no longer get steady work in fish plants) had their claims challenged (FishNet, undated). Under TAGS an appeals process was established in May 1995 consisting of two Independent Review Panels, one for processing workers and one for fish harvesters. Muzychka (1994:5) cites anecdotal evidence to the effect that women were more likely than men to be denied NCARP benefits, and concludes that "they were not doing well in the appeals process." Accepting this as fact, Muzychka calls for more research into the causes of this situation. The same argument is made by Wright (1995). Following this up with a closer examination of the statistical evidence we come to a different conclusion.

The success rate at appeal for both men and women fell dramatically as TAGS replaced NCARP, and it is also clear that female plant workers did better than their male counterparts under both programmes. The opposite holds for fishers (rows 1-2, Table 5). But given the substantial differences in success rates between the sexes, the matter needs to be probed further. If the appeals process was gender neutral, then success rates should have reflected the gender distribution in each occupation, all else being the same. In testing this hypothesis by adjusting success rates in relation to gender distribution, it appears that as a group women did not fare as well as they should have. Female fishers under NCARP did vastly better than expected. This is quite contrary to Muzychka's conclusion cited above. Why, then, did female fishers under NCARP seem to "do well"? Anecdotal evidence shared with the authors by participants in the fishery and other observers suggests a simple explanation: under NCARP the burden of proof in establishing sufficient activity as a fisher to qualify for financial benefits (e.g., fishing with spouse on same vessel) was not nearly as onerous as it later became under TAGS.

Table 4. Estimated^a Number of Individuals Exiting the Fishery Under NCARP (1994), and TAGS (1998), by Occupation, Gender and Adjustment Option

Option Elected:	<u>Fishers</u>		<u>Plant workers</u>		<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>
	Male	Female	Male	Female		%
<u>NCARP</u>						
Early Retirement	596	81	296	463	1 436	9
Groundfish Licence Retirement	329	45	1	1	376	2
Training for Work Outside the Fishery	253	35	375	587	1 250	7
Training for Work Inside the Fishery	6 448	879	2 638	4 126	14 091	82
Total under NCARP:	7 626	1 040	3 310	5 177	17 153	100
<u>TAGS</u>						
Early Retirement	488	66	244	381	1 179	9
Groundfish Licence Retirement	273	37	1	2	313	2
Training for Work Outside the Fishery	210	29	312	489	1 040	9
Training for Work Inside the Fishery	2 955	403	2 432	3 805	9 595	80
Total under TAGS:	3 926	535	2 989	4 677	12 127	100

Note: ^aGenerated using occupational data by gender from the 1991 census, and data from Gardner Pinfold (1994), Savoie (1994), and HRDC (1998a).

Source: Authors' compilation.

In every other category women did not have the success that consideration to their numbers would have suggested. For example, under NCARP a female plant worker was twice as likely to win an appeal (row 5), whereas our expected rate of success was two and a half times (row 6). This again contradicts Muzychka's statement that the rejection rates under NCARP were "very close," only slightly favouring female plant workers.

Retirements

Under both programmes, clients who wished to leave the industry could opt for early retirement. This option provided those eligible with retirement income until the age of 65, as long as they were between the ages of 55 and 64.³⁴ The age stipulation had undesirable consequences for women, many of whom had begun work in fish plants as early as age 15, and had accumulated a lifetime of work experience by 45 years of age (Woodrow and Ennis, 1994). They nevertheless failed to qualify for early retirement.³⁵

While one must assume that the implications of this rule were intentional, it is clear that the importance of the demographics had not escaped policy makers entirely. HRDC (1998a) lamented that one of the “enormous and unique adjustment challenges” was that 49 percent of the TAGS clientele were 40 years of age or older. Four years earlier Gardner Pinfold (1994) had reported that 53 percent of the NCARP clientele were 40 years of age or older. The numbers of female fishers and plant workers who took early retirement per male counterpart were the same under both programmes (Table 4): a retired plant worker was 1.6 times more likely to be female, and a retired fisher was 7.4 times more likely to be male. These ratios are not out of line with those of the employed plant workers and fishers. But the higher number of women aged 45 and over, and the failure to take account of work histories suggest that more women should probably have been eligible. A more equitable outcome might have resulted from admitting those who had, say, 25 to 30 years of relevant experience in full-time equivalents but might not have reached age 55, and rejecting those who had reached the minimum age but had only five or six years’ experience. Numerous complaints were received by the Regional Office in St. John’s from women who did not qualify for early retirement (Glavine, 2001). That alternative eligibility criteria were not used suggests a degree of insensitivity to the differential impacts on women, particularly plant workers in rural areas. In fairness, one plausible explanation is the time (and cost) involved in assembling the data base required for schemes that involved work histories; and time was at a premium when it came to distributing benefits to individuals who suddenly found themselves without a means of livelihood.

Table 5. Appealing the Eligibility Rules: Approval Rates by Programme, Gender and Occupation

	NCARP		TAGS	
	<u>Fishers</u>	<u>Plant workers</u>	<u>Fishers</u>	<u>Plant workers</u>
1. Male approvals as % of all male appeals	39	34	4	12.2
2. Female approvals as % of all female appeals	28	68	0.7	25.6
3. Adjusted ^a male approval rate (%)	34	16	0.5	5.7
4. Adjusted ^a female approval rate (%)	4	36	0.6	13.5
5. Ratio of rows 2 and 1	0.7	2	0.2	2.1
6. Ratio of rows 4 and 3	0.1	2.5	1.2	2.4

Note: ^aadjusted by the proportion of male (female) workers to the total number of workers of both genders, respectively, by occupation.

Source: Calculated from DFO, Economic Analysis Division, February 1994, in Muzychka (1994); and Williams (1996). Data for TAGS is for 1995.

Retraining and Professionalization

The training options were controversial. Training outside the fishery was heavily criticized for two principal reasons. First, the alternative employment opportunities were not attractive for a target group with the demographic and skill characteristics described above. Second, women and men concurred that the training on offer was largely wasted as it did not improve employability, at least not locally. Worse still, it has been alleged that many women made the “wrong” training choices because they were poorly advised. Some employment counsellors were accused of discrimination on the basis of sex by encouraging women to train in “pink collar” programs such as secretarial studies, hairstyling, and personal service jobs, while encouraging men to participate in technical training, construction trades and heavy equipment operation.³⁶ Yet it was known well before the moratorium that a number of traditional female occupational skills were in excess supply, particularly in rural areas, and that it was futile to encourage women to enter areas where there was little local opportunity for future employment (Anger et al., 1986). Nevertheless, under both NCARP and TAGS, women were (re)trained in skills for which supply outstripped local demand (Williams, 1996; HRDC, 1996b). Williams (1996), for example, showed that 12 percent of female TAGS clients trained in clerical/secretarial programmes, and six percent as beauticians, hairstylists, housekeepers, nannies and other personal service jobs. Only five percent of women trained in more

male-dominated areas such as construction labouring, and “few” as heavy equipment operators or in other construction-related trades. The implication is that more women should have been trained in these male-dominated occupations.

However, there is some little-noticed evidence to the contrary. In 1993 the provincial Department of Education and Employment and Immigration Canada released an analysis of labour market conditions (*Prospects '93*), which was used by Canada Employment Centre staff and NCARP counsellors to evaluate training opportunities. The report rated employment prospects as “poor,” “fair,” “good,” or “excellent.” In addition, an “imbalance indicator” related the number of UI beneficiaries to the experienced labour force by occupation. The ratio for all occupations in 1992 was 0.19 (or one beneficiary for every five people in the labour force). If the ratio for a given occupation exceeded 19 percent, this was taken as an indication that there was a substantial number of experienced workers already unemployed.

Surprisingly, *Prospects '93* rated job prospects in occupations such as secretarial/office administration and hairstyling/cosmetology as “fair” to “good,” while most of the male-dominated fields such as heavy equipment operation, bricklaying and carpentry were rated “poor.” However, many males participated in these programs, perhaps because they were more inclined than women to relocate. Women were as likely as men to accept mobility assistance but they were less inclined to actually move (Robinson, 1997). Important too for women were household factors, socio-cultural constraints, and interestingly, their spouse’s activity or lack thereof (HRDC, 1998a).

Counsellors were sometimes accused of discriminating against women by dispensing prejudicial career advice.³⁷ It is beyond dispute that many counsellors were inexperienced in providing such advice and therefore relied heavily on *Prospect '93*. But, interestingly, the anecdotal evidence from focus groups suggest that counsellors for the most part acted in a professional manner and were not to blame for the programme’s problems (see e.g., HRDC, 1996b).

The failure of government departments to coordinate their policies and efforts led to the implementation of conflicting programme objectives (Savoie, 1994; HRDC, 1998a; House, 1999). The best example of this was the attempt to reduce the size of the fishery labour force while at the same time offering clients the opportunity to retrain *inside* the fishery. A key feature of this option was the new programme of professionalization.³⁸ HRDC was responsible for the administration, and all fishers (and possibly plant workers) designated as participants of the “fishery of the future” were expected to enroll. But officials did not define who would be part of the future fishery. The size of the client population was significantly underestimated, and there were not enough counsellors to run the programme. The active programming budget was cut, and the size of the target population had to be reduced to 12,000 clients (HRDC, 1998a).³⁹ This helped create divisions among clients where none were before. TAGS thus unwittingly compounded the difficulties facing rural communities (House, 1999).

It appears to have come as a surprise that most clients chose this option rather than to train outside the fishery. Perhaps the strength of the attachment to the fishery was underestimated. Many more than expected found it hard to leave the industry upon which the family had for generations depended for survival. Given the bleak alternatives and poor employment prospects in other industries, the decision to remain and retrain within the fishery seemed rational to many women and men alike. However, from the NCARP experience it should have been clear that the majority of clients were going to select training within the fishery if it was offered as an adjustment option.⁴⁰ This may explain the misgivings of some officials about professionalization as an adjustment option, since this did not seem to get fishery workers out of the fishing industry (HRDC, 1998b). On the contrary, it aimed at strengthening the participants' employment prospects inside the fishery at a time when the return of the northern cod was nowhere in sight. The uncertain future demand for plant workers led HRDC to conclude that it made little sense to train people for an industry unless it is known what that industry would need.

In sum, TAGS did not do any better than NCARP in removing people from the fishery. In a survey of future expectations, TAGS officials found that 50 percent of the clients felt that they would be either fishing or working in a fish plant two years hence. The "resilience of the stay-inside-the-fishery attitude" was rooted in the ambiguity surrounding the future of fish plants, the confusion generated by reports about the state of the groundfish stocks, and rumours about the reopening of the fishery (HRDC, 1998a). Initial intentions notwithstanding, the government failed to provide any direction or indication as to which fish plants would be involved in the fishery of the future. In leaving this decision to plant owners, a key recommendation of a federal government study was ignored: "the sooner ... governments ... outline in specific terms the 'core fishery' of tomorrow, the sooner the process of adjustment can begin for individuals and communities and the sooner the groundfish industry can renew itself" (Savoie, 1994:61).

Child Care

Adequate child care has long been recognized as essential to women's labour force participation. However, as long as child care is considered a woman's rather than a parental issue it is difficult for women to compete with men in paid employment, all else being the same (Kealey, 1986). While great strides have been made towards achieving equality in the workforce, the domestic roles of women are essentially unchanged. Women living in rural areas require flexible work schedules and more help with daycare in order to participate in the labour force (Chicha, 1999).

In discussing this point, Kealey (1986) argued that the provincial government can raise the status of women in the labour force by providing daycare that meets the needs of working women. Child care allowances were provided, but the terms were subject to a great deal of criticism, especially under TAGS. Women often did not know child care allowances existed, or did not qualify for this assistance for var-

ious reasons. The criteria were often thought to be too rigid, for instance the rule that an allowance was not available if the caregiver lived in the same house (HRDC, 1996b:25). The quality of care depends on the caregiver, and a family member might provide better care than a paid employee. But it was TAGS policy that if a child resided in the household of the caregiver, then that child was considered a member of that family, and it was not considered justifiable to provide a daycare allowance. However, if no member of the extended household was able *or* willing to care for the child, the parent could seek a caregiver outside the home. The rules thus encouraged parents to find child care in their own community. It is conceivable that some parents in very small communities could not find child care locally and had to go elsewhere, but the important point is that the rules governing the child care allowance were established in order to minimize the potential for fraudulent claims.⁴¹ It is arguable that the daycare needs were not met (Robinson, 1995). But the allegation that there was no documented rationale for the child care policy (see FishNet, undated) is incorrect.

Benefit Rates

The benefits paid under NCARP and TAGS were based on an individual's average weekly UI/EI rate. Under NCARP, the monthly benefit was 70 percent of this rate (FFAW 1993), and women received less than men because they had worked fewer weeks in the relevant years prior to the 1992 moratorium (1989-91), due to resource shortages and early plant closures (Rowe, 1991; Palmer, 1992). The TAGS benefit rate was based on the average UI benefit rate for the period 1990-1992. The minimum and maximum weekly benefits were \$211 and \$382, with the average payout for fishers and plant workers being \$336 and \$256 respectively. Given this formula, it is not surprising that under both programmes women were more likely to receive lower benefits for a shorter time than men (Williams, 1996; HRDC, 1998a). Nor is it surprising that the benefit rates by gender under both NCARP and TAGS were highly correlated with the male-to-female ratio of total personal income. This underscores the fact that the benefit rates for fishers and plant workers of both genders reflected the differences in hours worked between males and females in the province as a whole. That is, the distribution of compensation for unemployment in the fishery mirrored the general distribution of personal income from all sources prior to the crisis in 1992.

An alternative to this "gender neutral" distribution would have been one explicitly based on gender, and would have recognized the factors that influence the different participation rates in the fishery. For example, when it became evident that the groundfish resources were in crisis, irregular and night shifts were eliminated (Rowe, 1991). In many cases, it was women who worked nights in order to care for their children in the daytime. It has been argued that as a result women received lower benefit rates under both NCARP and TAGS (Williams, 1996). This has been interpreted by some observers as insensitivity or lack of awareness on the part

of government of the different needs of women well before the moratorium. While we are not disputing that this is a possibility, it is instructive to consider other gender equity aspects of the *ex post* distribution of benefits before drawing any conclusions.

The gender differential (female benefits as a percentage of male benefits) was about 76 percent in 1999 for the province as a whole. The regional variation in the differential (Figure 3: Panel A) was considerable. This data indicates that depending on their place of residence, women received between 56 and 94 percent of the NACRP/TAGS benefits received by men on a per capita basis. We refer to this as the “actual compensation ratio” (ACR). But how did women fare as a *group*? That is, what is the distribution of benefits when dollars are allocated one-for-one to men and women on the basis of the sex ratio? To examine this we calculate what we call the implicit “gender ratio compensation” (GRC) by adjusting the ratio of dollar benefits received by the sex ratio of the beneficiaries province-wide, and for each region as defined in the province’s Strategic Social Plan (SSP). The results are surprising. On this calculation (Figure 4: Panel B), the GRC — the proportion by which women as a group were paid in excess, relative to their numbers in the client population — ranged from 0 percent (Avalon in 1992) to 65 percent (Labrador in 1999). The GRC shows that women as a group received compensation in excess of what their numerical representation in the client population would dictate. Moreover, the amount by which the GRC exceed the ACR shows an upward trend during the study period. It also shows considerable variation between regions. This was to be expected, as some regions were more dependent than others on northern cod. The higher GRCs in the Labrador and Eastern regions in 1992 can thus be seen to reflect perceived greater need. By contrast, women in the Avalon and Northeast Avalon regions received the lowest benefits. This is possibly a reflection of the greater employment opportunities and better access to social infrastructure in urban areas. As time went on the relative position of women in the different regions remained fairly stable. Labrador is the most notable exception. The drastic fall in women’s benefits (relative to men’s) between 1994 and 1998 is puzzling. In the absence of a sudden demographic shift in the client population, it is conceivable that weaker political representation or the geographical isolation of women in Labrador may have caused them to be overlooked. In any event, it appears that the situation was quickly corrected. By 1999 women in Labrador were paid in excess of the provincial average. It must be emphasized that Panel B is clearly no more “correct” than Panel A. It merely represents the other side of the same coin. Nonetheless, both views help to bring balance to the assessment of the impacts on gender equity of the actual distribution of dollar benefits under these programmes.

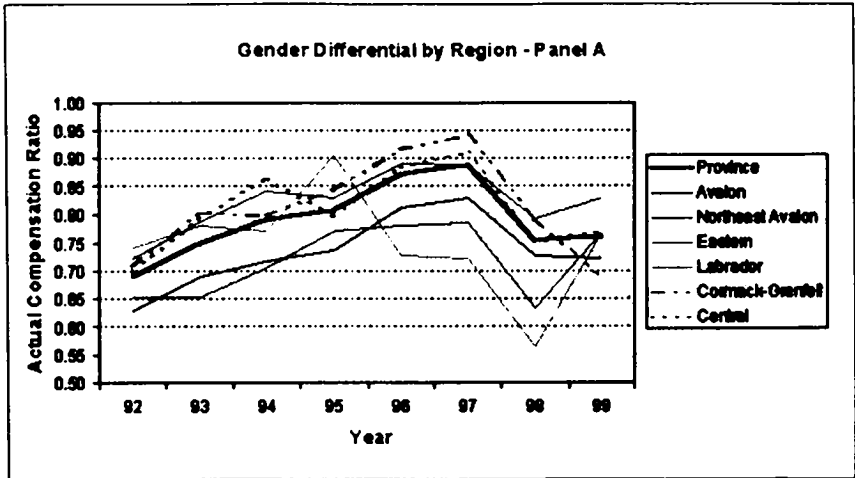


Figure 3. The Gender Differential⁴² — Panel A

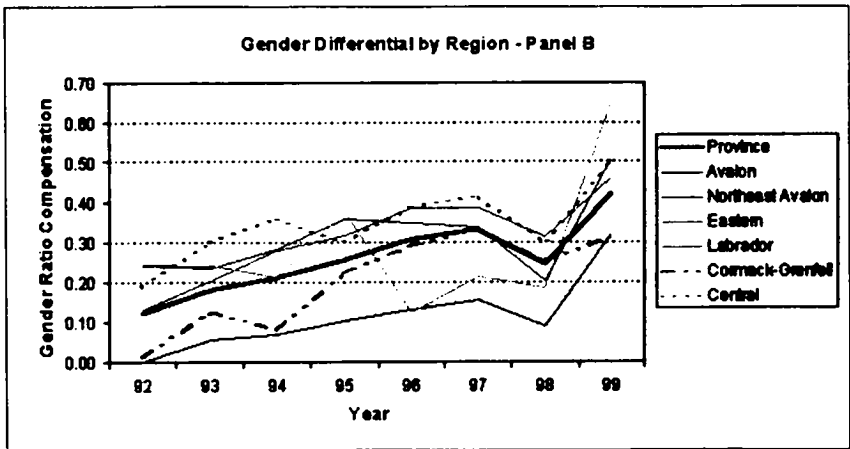


Figure 4. The Gender Differential⁴³ — Panel B

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In retrospect it is safe to say that NCARP's objective, as well as the range of its instruments, was too ambitious. Arguably, NCARP should have been implemented as an income support programme only, until such time as a properly researched strategy

had been developed to overcome the barriers to restructuring identified in previous studies. Instead, millions of taxpayers' dollars were spent to deal with a client population about which managers appear to have known surprisingly little of any relevance. Failure to dismantle the barriers to adjustment continued to plague policy-making when TAGS replaced NCARP. In 1996 the need to simplify the complex mission of TAGS became evident. When it appeared that the size of the client population had been significantly underestimated, the objective of reducing the fishery labour force by 50 percent in four years became simply unattainable. All training programmes were then terminated, and the remaining resources were devoted to income support. By the end of 1996, after several downward revisions, the employment reduction target had been lowered to the 12,000 individuals who in the end left the groundfishery. However, the official claim that the programme target was met is a contentious one. Most of those who trained for work inside the fishery have merely shifted to other areas of the fishing industry and remain ready to move back into the groundfishery if and when that fishery reopens (HRDC, 1998a:iv). This begs the fundamental question whether the public policy response to the fisheries crises in Newfoundland can be said to have been successful in any meaningful way.

It was the joint responsibility of DFO and the provincial government to designate which plants would be part of "the fishery of the future." The political will of the federal government to establish the rules of the fishery of the future faltered when it was faced with the reaction of fishery workers in a state of shock and anger. Violence erupted in St. John's when infuriated fishery workers tried to gain access to the federal fisheries minister. Neither level of government wanted to designate fish plants for permanent closure, preferring to leave these decisions to the private sector (HRDC, 1998a). The political difficulties are understandable, but the failure to provide clear direction to clients and the general public had serious consequences. The failure to provide leadership and direction on this issue contributed to throwing the purpose of the adjustment programme into a state of confusion from which it did not emerge. HRDC (1998a) concedes that the failure to designate the plants that would remain active in the future fishery, and thus (implicitly at least) those that would close, hindered the programme and severely disadvantaged women. Although the number of processing plants has fallen by about 43 percent since 1989, there are still strong indications of overcapacity, especially in shellfish processing (Government of Canada, 2002). A downturn in these fisheries will again disadvantage women disproportionately. The implication for fisheries policy is clear. In order to avoid a repeat performance in the event of another fisheries collapse, it is imperative that the gender-specific outcomes of the policy instruments be understood. From a gender perspective, the internal consistency of the package of policy measures depends on the way in which they combine to generate different outcomes for men and women. Internal consistency also depends on cooperation and coordination within and between the federal and provincial governments. The

importance and pervasiveness of this political-bureaucratic dimension cannot be overstated.

When a moratorium was announced in May 1992, it was supposed to last two years. Expecting that the groundfishery would reopen in 1994, many clients simply postponed making adjustment plans. Others contested the validity of the moratorium and the scientific findings that supported it. The loss of a resource to which many felt they had a hereditary right was hard to accept, as was the consequent need to adjust existing occupational and perhaps even residential choices. The confusion and controversy surrounding the scientific reports, and the projected duration of the closure, caused a measure of public hostility that weakened the political resolve to impress upon the clients that a significant reduction in the labour force in the fishery would certainly be necessary. This point is well documented and had been made repeatedly in the past. The case was stated plainly in the evaluation report on NCARP (Savoie, 1994). The task at hand is nothing short of transforming the rural society of Newfoundland and Labrador. It means coming to terms with the fact that not every fishery-dependent community will survive; and that the fishery of the future will have to be significantly reduced and some fish plants will have to close permanently. It is an immense challenge and will require the cooperation of many government departments and countless policy actors in the public, para-public or private sectors.

The political dimension of the challenge caused previous experience to be overshadowed by political expediency and the tensions of intergovernmental conflict. There is plenty of evidence to show how political considerations dominated the policy agenda under NCARP and TAGS. But it is wrong to attribute the failings of the policy response to political expediency alone. We argue that the problems with the adjustment programmes discussed in this paper, in particular those related to gender equity, could have been minimized if not avoided altogether. Why were they not? Those directly responsible for responding to the crisis realized that too many workers were dependent on the fishery. But this realization ran counter to the old tradition cultivated by both the provincial and federal governments of operating the fishery based on the employment needs. The complexity and crisis nature of the task facing governments notwithstanding, the answer is in the final analysis straightforward: a wealth of data, analysis and experience was largely ignored by officials who were singularly unprepared for this crisis. On the eve of the moratorium even the best of intentions could not compensate for earlier failure to heed warnings from scientists of impending and serious resource problems unless the fishing pressure inside and outside Canada's territorial waters was sharply reduced. Regrettably, this problem of inadequate policy coordination and integration extended beyond the fishery. In a study of the rural economic development effort in the 1980s and 1990s, House (1999) sums up the general problem as it extends to the fishery: Newfoundland and Labrador suffered from policy "implementation fail-

ure” due to bureaucratic obstruction and political weakness. It is ultimately from this observation that the principal policy implications of our research flow.

Policy Implications

It is clear that the labour market outcomes for men and women in the Newfoundland fishery prior to the closures varied with occupation and differences in labour force participation behaviour. For example, men typically received higher pay and were eligible for higher unemployment insurance benefits for longer duration than women. Although the adjustment programmes were not designed to correct that situation, it appears that many female clients felt that the policy measures fell far short of their needs and expectations. We agree with the existing research which suggests that the differential treatment of women did place women at a certain relative disadvantage. It is only fair to say that the adjustment policies did not on the whole exhibit the sensitivity to gender differences in outcomes that was warranted, but whether this constituted a gender bias is another matter altogether.

The lack of adequate gender sensitivity is surprising, given that before the crises a wealth of data and research clearly pointed to the need for a gender-sensitive orientation in the design and execution of adjustment policy. By this we mean a need to take account of how the gender-specific outcomes would be affected by the distribution of assistance on the basis of past income and employment patterns. This issue is important from a gender equity perspective, but it also has implications for the government’s wider adjustment aims. The failure to reconcile financial compensation measures based on past labour market behaviour, with the different social constraints on the ability or inclination of men and women to respond to the complementary measures (such as training), caused unnecessary grief, and quite possibly rendered the entire adjustment process considerably less effective than it could have been in terms of permanent exits of labour and capital from the fishery. This is because most clients who successfully moved out of the groundfishery did so by training for work in other sectors of the fishery. As a result, the problems created by an excess supply of labour in an industry often plagued by resource shortages have not been resolved, impairing the ability of the industry to react to future shortages. Given that the deployment of exiting labour with little or no opportunity cost is perhaps the most difficult policy problem of all, the measures discussed here did more to achieve immediate relief than resolve fundamental structural problems. For example, the criteria for early retirement slowed exit from the fishery. Women were in all likelihood disadvantaged by the criteria for early retirement, even when differences in past labour force participation behaviour are considered. The criteria made it more difficult for women to qualify, and fewer female plant workers retired than would have been socially desirable. This meant in turn that urgent reductions in plant capacity and possible relocation of residence was made more difficult. Similarly, the stronger attachment of many women to their community, their lower

benefit rates, and their difficulties with child care made training an unattractive proposition, especially when it was for jobs that did not exist locally.

NCARP and TAGS counsellors were accused of inexperience and discrimination against women by promoting female-dominated occupations. Apart from some anecdotal evidence we do not find much support for these serious accusations. The evidence examined suggests that counsellors made decisions in the best interests of their clients given the circumstances and the labour market information made available to them.

Officials responsible for the child care allowance were accused of not recognizing the daycare needs of women in rural communities. The rule that a child care allowance would not be available to a caregiver who lived in the same household as the child was unacceptably rigid to many women. However, it appears that the rule was established in the interest of fairness and in order to minimize the potential for fraudulent claims.

Did the differential treatment amount to gender bias? We maintain that it did not, though there is plenty of evidence of differential treatment in both the anecdotal and statistical data. The anecdotal evidence is overwhelmingly critical and suggestions of gender bias are pervasive. It is clear that the anecdotal data reflects how many women experienced their situation, and several studies well before the 1992 moratorium documented the precarious situation facing many women in the processing sector. There can be little doubt, therefore, that the programmes were in some ways insensitive to how the needs of women and their role in the household would affect their adjustment prospects. However, when anecdotal evidence is stacked against the statistical evidence, we cannot conclude that on balance, the policy outcomes were characterized by a gender bias, in the sense that they left women as a group relatively worse off than men. In fact, some key features of these programmes had gender effects that were more favourable to women than previously believed.

Consider programme access and benefit rates. Benefit rates were lower and the duration of eligibility shorter for women. Moreover, the benefits women received varied substantially by region, because the rates were based on location and the years of (plant) work experience immediately prior to the moratorium. Location seems to have mattered in terms of both the dependence of the community on northern cod, and the availability of alternative sources of income. Women on the Avalon received the lowest benefits on a per capita basis, whereas women in remote regions such as Labrador received considerably higher benefits. While the benefit rates were in all cases lower than those of men, they were no more discriminatory than labour market-based compensation generally. As a group, women did much better than men. If the benefits paid to women are adjusted by their numbers in the labour force, they were paid in excess of what the sex ratio would indicate as an even distribution. It has been alleged that women had a harder time qualifying for financial benefits under the adjustment programmes, but once again this charge

is not supported by the evidence. The data on appeals shows that women as a group were for the most part more successful than men. This is not to say that there were no exceptions to these findings. The adjustment needs of some women may not have been met (which we do not dispute), but on the whole we do not find any evidence of gender bias against women. Our analysis thus goes some way towards reconciling the anecdotal and the statistical evidence.

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Notes

¹The inconclusive results of the incrimination, introspection, and investigation (scientific) into the fate of the missing cod brings to mind the poetic parallel of Homer's frustration with the riddle of the fishermen: "What we caught not, we carry with us." Cited in W.P. Ker, *The Dark Ages* (Toronto: Nelson, 1961), 87.

²There were several earlier but much smaller policy programmes. Notably, the Atlantic Fisheries Adjustment Program (AFAP) in May 1990 designated \$40 million for research in the Newfoundland Region through the Northern Cod Science Program. This was followed by NCARP in 1992. The Transitional Fisheries Adjustment Program (TFAP) was introduced in April 1993 to assist individuals affected by quota cuts on the West Coast (Gulf region). The Atlantic Groundfish Adjustment Program (AGAP) was designed to assist industry workers affected by closures and quota reductions announced in 1993. Most recently, TAGS.

³Fishery workers who could demonstrate a dependence on the groundfishery in NAFO area 2J3KL.

⁴Under NCARP, Northern cod fishers in NAFO fishing area 2J3KL. However, under NCARP and TAGS a large proportion of the clientele lived in areas other than those adjacent to 2J3KL.

⁵Several attempts were made to contact the Department of Fisheries and Oceans regarding NCARP. However, the officials reached would not speak on this topic under any conditions.

⁶Of the 12,127 TAGS clients who had left the groundfish industry by the end of 1996, only 1,040 were working outside the fishery.

⁷See also Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (1985); Anger et al. (1986); and HRDC (1996b). HRDC's child care policy in the context of the adjustment programmes is discussed below.

⁸In some cases these documents are internal reports by federal government departments, others are consultancy reports. An anonymous source at DFO confirmed the existence of these reports but would not make them available.

⁹For a discussion of different training initiatives under TAGS undertaken by the Economic Recovery Commission, see House (1999).

¹⁰In Norway, earlier tendencies to relocate did not occur after the most recent fisheries crisis, presumably because of a high general level of unemployment and poor prospects of getting a job by moving (Apostle and Mikalsen, 1995).

¹¹See HRDC (1998a:15). However, a recent attempt to restructure the plant capacity by the dominant fish processor Fisheries Products International was effectively undone by changes in the provincial legislation to ensure that future restructuring plans by this company are aligned with what the Government considers its social responsibility (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2002).

¹²In the community of Elliston a woman was considered lazy if she did not grow her own seed (Murray, 1979).

¹³It should be noted that substantial progress has been made in recent years in statistically measuring and recording non-market economic activity.

¹⁴See also McCay (1995).

¹⁵For example, FFAW/CAW (1994) claims that TAGS was developed without considering that NCARP failed to meet the needs of women. Wright (1995) maintains more generally that gender inequality and its links to the state and economy keep women economically marginalized in Newfoundland.

¹⁶Since 1974 men and women in Canada must legally receive the same minimum wage. But not until 1980 did a woman fishing with her spouse qualify for unemployment insurance.

¹⁷See e.g., Chicha (1999).

¹⁸For a related, comparative perspective on the Norwegian fishery crises, see Jentoft (1993).

¹⁹The nature of these tasks and the higher proportion of women in these jobs are indications of a (negative) differential impact in terms of work-related injuries for women in the processing sector (see Neis and Williams, 1993). By the same token, fatalities and injuries at sea take a relatively higher toll on men (see also Parsons, 1998).

²⁰Unequal access to better paying jobs and different spending habits can also cause dependencies that are particularly problematic in physically or financially abusive relationships. The social infrastructure needed to avert these problems is non-existent (FishNet, undated).

²¹In workplaces where nonstandard workers provide the flexibility to respond to daily, weekly, annual, and cyclical variations in demand, and where employers want to reduce fixed costs, employees are less likely to have the benefit coverage of full-time regular employees (Lipsett and Reesor, 1999).

²²Grzetic (2002) presents recent anecdotal evidence to this effect.

²³Statistics Canada, and Newfoundland Statistics Agency, Census data.

²⁴See footnote 23.

²⁵Alastair O'Rielly, president of the Fisheries Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (FANL), personal communication, 23 March 2000.

²⁶Funding was withdrawn after a progress review in 1996. 3,500 individuals participated. In the latter years most participants were women (FFAW, 1996).

²⁷From all sources reported by Statistics Canada.

²⁸Cf. McCay (1995) and Wright (1995).

²⁹See footnote 35.

³⁰A wage subsidy did form part of the labour market adjustment measures as an incentive to hire TAGS clients outside the traditional fishery. Support was provided for clients to seek out such jobs. Important related measures included self-employment assistance and mobility assistance.

³¹Women's FishNet advocates the needs and concerns of women in the fisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia. Formed in 1994, it consists of representatives from the fishery unions, women's organizations, government and community agencies and researchers.

³²'Trawlermen' is a small category in absolute terms identified separately in some of the statistics on NCARP and TAGS. It is omitted here due to the limited data available for this category.

³³Statistics Canada Census data.

³⁴For the present purpose these were the main requirements. For the additional criteria, see Gardner Pinfold (1994).

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³⁵The extent of relevant work experience in full-time equivalents of this clientele is not known to us.

³⁶Training seats were provided TAGS clients in Adult Basic Education; Management Occupations; Business, Finance, and Administration; Natural and Applied Sciences and Related Occupations; Health Occupations; Occupations in Social Science, Government Service and Religion; Occupations in Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport; Sales and Service; Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators and Related Occupations; Occupations Unique to Primary Industry; Occupations Unique to Processing, Manufacturing and Utilities; and others (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1996). See also HRDC (1996b).

³⁷Williams (1996) refers to a case where about 70 (or 85 according to another source) female fishers from the Northern Peninsula and Labrador Straits (Flower's Cove area) challenged TAGS regulations in Provincial Court. They also argued before the Canadian Human Rights Commission that they were denied TAGS assistance by DFO because of discrimination on the basis of sex. See also FFAW (1996) and Muzychka (1994).

³⁸A precursor to the Professionalization and Certification Board, established in 1997 at the initiative of the fishers. It serves to restrict access to the fishery as certification by the Board is a requirement for participation in a commercial fishery and for fishing licence consideration by the DFO (see e.g., Parsons 1998).

³⁹By the end of 1996 an estimated 12,000 clients had adjusted out of the groundfishery, while an estimated 28,000 had not (HRDC, 1998a:ii). The target number was then modified from 15,000 to 12,000 (HRDC, 1998a:44).

⁴⁰Of the 17,074 NCARP clients who opted for training, 83 percent trained for work inside the fishery.

⁴¹Barbara Reid, personal communication, 28 August 2000.

⁴²1994 was the transition year between NCARP and TAGS. The data for 1994 represents the average of the values reported under NCARP and TAGS. Source of data: Newfoundland Statistics Agency, and the Strategic Social Plan.

⁴³Source of data: see footnote 42.