The Marshall Inquiry: Who Judges the Judges?

New Maritimes

September/October 1988 $2.50

The Trials of Eric Smith

Erin Goodman

How A New Brunswick Fishery Dies

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A Letter from the Editors

A New *New Maritimes*?

Well, Yes and No...

To Our Long-Standing Readers

Many of you know us from way back — a couple hundred of you, in fact, have been reading *New Maritimes* since our very first issue in September of 1982, and have allowed us to grace your mailbox every month for six full years. Hundreds of others have joined up with us more recently along the way.

You've come to expect a high standard of analysis and presentation on regional goings-on that just isn't available elsewhere in the Maritime media. And, by and large, we like to think you've found that in *New Maritimes*.

We've long felt it important that *New Maritimes* play a part in the struggle for a better life — for that 99% of us in the region who don't command the heights of political and economic power . What you are now holding in your hands is a reflection of our renewed commitment to that struggle.

Why the change from a 16-page tabloid on newsprint ten times a year to a magazine, with many more pages, six times a year?

The format change will, we hope, give us a higher profile on the region's newsstands, where so often in the past we've spied a tabloid *New Maritimes* on the bottom shelf, hidden underneath 30 copies of *The National Enquirer.* A higher profile should lead to more readers, more subscribers and, we hope, more impact.

The change in frequency is simply due to the greater amount of (mostly volunteer) work involved in collecting more material for each issue. We will, in fact, be producing many more *New Maritimes* pages each year than in the past.

Over the years, we've established a certain standard of alternative publishing in the Maritimes. It's a standard that we think we can be reasonably proud of, and one that *New Maritimes*, as a bi-monthly magazine, will strive to maintain, and perhaps even improve upon, as we head into the 1990s.

To New Readers

What you are holding in your hands is, indeed, something old and something new.

New Maritimes has existed since 1982 as a 16-page newsprint tabloid. Most of the work that goes into writing and producing it is donated by volunteers. Financially, we're supported by our readers, not by big corporate advertisers.

All this has given *New Maritimes* a freedom lacking in (or unsought by) other media in the Maritimes. We don't pull our punches. We take the side of the fish plant worker, the single mother and the woods worker against "Captain Highliner," the tangle of government bureaucracy and the forestry multinational.

Over the years, we've brought our readers a fresh look at both our culture and our history: a look at a culture that is more than staged Tattoos and quaint villages: a look at a history that is more than a "golden age of wooden ships and iron men."

This has earned us both notoriety and praise. One reader, in a note asking that we cancel his subscription, called us "a bunch of troublesome reds." On the other hand, others have been more generous, and we've received awards of excellence from numerous regional and national media watchers.

No, *New Maritimes* is not a new venture. But we've made some big changes of late, and the most notable of these is the switch from tabloid to magazine format. What you're now holding is the first issue of a bi-monthly *New Maritimes* magazine. We think it reflects well both the experiences of our past and our aspirations for the future.

We hope you enjoy *New Maritimes*, and if you do, we'd urge you to use the form on page 8 to subscribe. That way, you'll become part of the network of people across (and even outside) the region who assure that the Maritimes has a voice, and a forum, for issues and ideas that we can all learn from.

And we think you'll be glad to find our next issue in your mailbox.

New Maritimes
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New Maritimes

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Soundings

A Shell of its Former Self: From Riches to Rags in New Brunswick's Crab Fishery

Sue Calhoun

The snow crab fishery on the Acadian Peninsula in New Brunswick's northeastern corner has always been a fishery of extremes. It has brought extreme wealth to a few, extreme hardship, even desperation, to many; extreme dependence of the Peninsula's economy on just one species. Now, landings are down by half for the second year in a row, and there are other extremes being predicted: extreme collapse of the stocks, and with it, extreme uncertainty about the Peninsula's future.

Snow crab is a classic, albeit extreme, example of a story that has unfolded, and continues to unfold, all over the Maritimes. It's a story about short-sighted thinking that has almost wiped out a valuable resource within a decade; a story, too, about how those who are already the most disadvantaged suffer the worst of the consequences.

The story began in the mid 1960s. There had been a snow crab fishery in the Gulf of St. Lawrence since 1966, but landings were minimal because the price was low, at only a few cents per pound. Then, in the late 1970s, the king crab fishery in Alaska collapsed, opening up a market for snow crab (also called Queen Crab) in Japan and the United States. Prices soared, and fishermen who had licences — or who could establish an historic right to one — went at the crab in a big way.

The biggest concentration of midshore crab boats in the Gulf is in the Caraquet-Shippagan-Lamèque triangle on the Acadian Peninsula. There are 80 of them, compared to roughly 45 in Quebec, one in southeastern New Brunswick, and two in Cape Breton. (There are also 250 inshore crab license holders in the region, although none in New Brunswick. They are allowed to set 30 traps compared to 150 set by the midshore boats). In 1983, the Acadian fleet landed $27 million worth of crab, representing one-third of all seafood landed in New Brunswick.

The trend continued, and it wasn't long before snow crab became the backbone of the fishery on the Acadian Peninsula. Many crab fishermen became rich. The first signs were evident to anyone taking a leisurely drive through the Peninsula. In the early 1980s, there were probably more satellite dishes per capita in a small village like Legoulet than any place else in the Maritimes. Chances were that if there was a satellite dish in front of a house, there were crab traps stacked out back. Fishermen also began buying big campers, gold jewellery, and fancy cars. Last year, the mayor of Lamèque told a conference in Caraquet that there were 32 crab fishermen who were millionaires in his village alone.

> Short-sighted thinking has almost wiped out a valuable resource within a decade

More recently, crab fishermen have bought fish plants to process their own crab. Crab fishermen own outright, or have shares in, a number of plants, including the former National Sea plant in Shippagan, MPQ Fisheries in Caraquet, McGraw Fresh and Frozen Fish in Tracadie, Ellis Seafoods in Stonehaven, and R & G Cormier in Grand-Anse.

But if crab fishermen were rapidly becoming success stories, the picture wasn't as rosy for the people working in the plants, most of whom were women. In the early 1980s, some processor moved from herring and groundfish, the stocks of which were on the decline anyway, to crab. Others switched from lobster because crab was more lucrative. As well, the magnaminous provincial fisheries minister, Jean Gauvin, licensed a lot of new plants. Everyone was scrambling to get in on the boom.

It wasn't long before the work was spread too thin. The crab season was only ten weeks long, and some workers began having a hard time putting in enough hours and enough weeks to collect unemployment insurance in the winter.

Then came the first of two shock waves. The market changed from a demand for canned crab to a demand for crab in the shell — crab "sections," as they're called. In 1982, the province had passed a regulation under the Fish Processing Act requiring that 60 per cent of the crab be processed into cans, in a measure aimed at protecting jobs. But in 1985, with the change in demand, the requirement was dropped from 60 to 30%, despite protests by workers. (There were rumours this year that plants were no longer respecting even the 30% requirement).

At the same time, several plants began installing mechanical meat extraction machines that did the work of people. Frustration levels were so high that at one point angry groups of workers in Shippagan stormed the plants, destroyed equipment, and even overturned a ten-wheeler on the wharf. Another frustration was that crab landed on the Peninsula was being trucked to plants in the southeast, where crab fishermen were paid 10 to 15 cents more per pound because plant workers there were non-unionized, and received the minimum wage (compared to around $6 an hour in the north).

From around 4,500 in 1985, the number of crab processing jobs has

dropped to less than 2,500 today, and many of these are not full-time for even ten weeks.

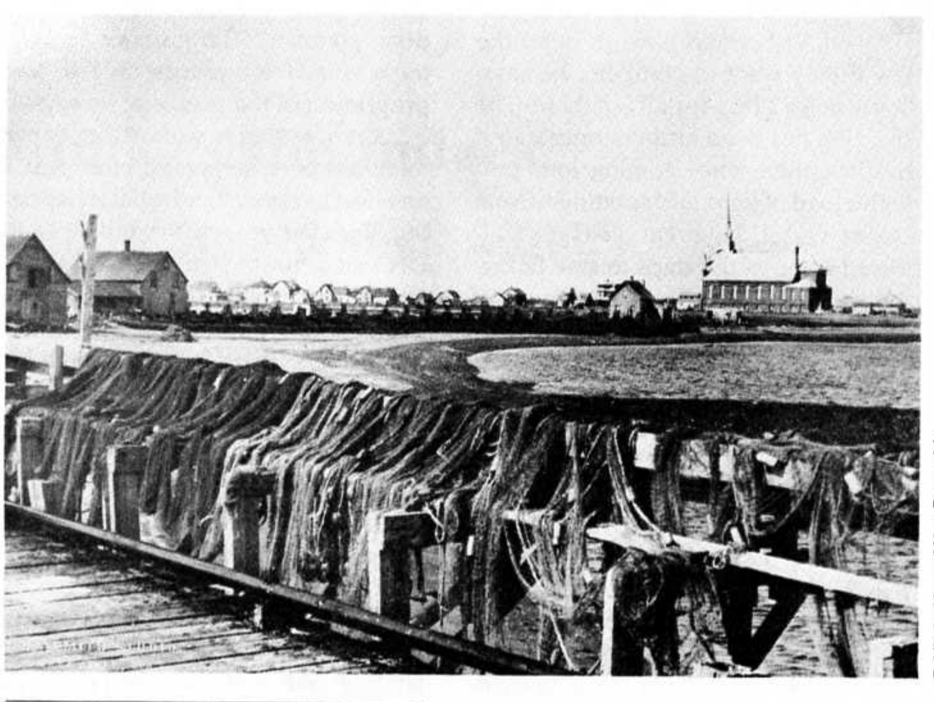
The second shock wave came as catches began to decline. From 27,000 metric tonnes for the entire midshore fleet in the Gulf in 1985, landings dropped to 23,600 tonnes in 1986, and then to 12,000 tonnes in 1987. Preliminary figures for 1988 are around 14,000 tonnes. The price has steadily increased (it went from 80¢ per pound in 1986, to $1.65 in 1987, and then to $2.25 in 1988), so the impact on fishermen has been minimal.

It's the plant workers who have suffered. In 1987, many didn't get even ten weeks of work. The Hatfield government — in a generous, election-year mood — spent a few million dollars on make-work projects to make sure people would have enough work to qualify for unemployment insurance in the winter. This year, though, the new Liberal government of Frank McKenna has taken a hard line, and refused to fund make-work projects, opting instead for establishment of a "Job Adjustment Centre" in Shippagan geared to diversifying the economy and creating long-term jobs. A few hundred jobs have been created, although there are many times that number of people looking for work.

Unless the government backs down on its stance, many people (especially women) on the Peninsula will face a long winter without unemployment insurance.

Today, in 1988, the big question on the Peninsula has become: what is happening to the crab resource? Crab pumps an estimated $60 million per year into the economy of the Peninsula. What will happen if there is no more crab? What will fishermen fish, and where will former crab plant workers work?

It's an issue on which even crab fishermen are split. Some, a minority, don't believe that the crab is finished, despite the dramatic drop in landings over the past two years. They maintain that the resource is still plentiful, and needs no protection, other than that afforded by being a seasonal fishery. (Fishermen can't fish in winter, because of the ice.) This minority broke away from the organization that represents midshore fishermen on the Peninsula, the L'Association Professionelle des Pêcheurs Acadiens (APPA), at that



Public Archives of New Brunswick

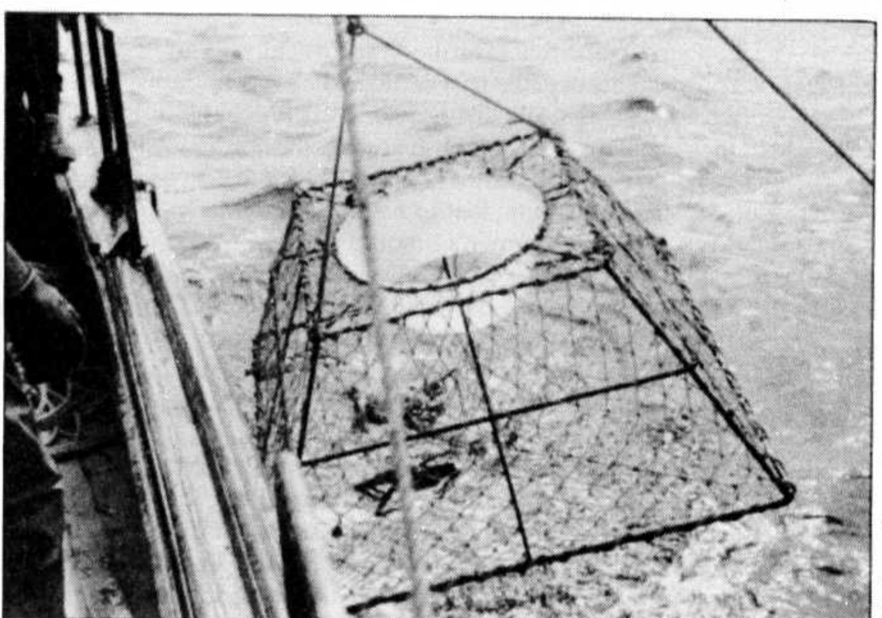
Shippagan, N.B., in the early 1900s

organization's annual meeting earlier this year because it didn't agree with the majority position.

Most APPA fishermen are concerned about the resource's future. They have asked that more research be done, that a committee be established to monitor the fishery week-by-week, and that this year's quota be set at 15,000 tonnes. Yet, despite this concern, many crab fishermen have continued to take as much crab as possible, just in case the resource is, indeed, collapsing. "Ils sont en train de cleaner la ressource" (roughly translated as "They're all running to clean out the resource.") has become a catch-phrase on the Peninsula.

There have been reports that some fishermen were setting double the number of traps legally allowed. By the end of the fifth week of this season, at least 1,200 illegal crab traps had been seized by the Canadian Coast Guard.

Accusations of illegality have been common in the crab fishery over the past few years. Even APPA president Jacques Haché admits that he, himself,



Fisheries and Oceans Canada

The Crab Fishery

has at times set more traps than legally allowed. Fishermen have to bend the law if they want to compete, he says, because it's a free-for-all out there. The situation has been further complicated by fishermen who, coming into port with a load of traps and spotting a Coast Guard vessel, have cut away and allowed some of the traps to sink below the surface, rather than face seizure of these illegal traps and a possible fine. Many such traps still sit on the ocean bottom, filling up with crab which end up dying or eating each other.

In any event, many people believe that the fishermen are to blame for the fact that landings are down so dramatically. APPA president Haché agrees that fishermen are partly responsible, although he mostly blames the DFO because, he says, the department hasn't been severe enough in enforcing legislation.

A DFO spokesperson in the northeast admits that the crab fishery — a deepwater fishery spread over the vast expanse of Gulf waters — has been difficult to control. The department is aware that fishermen are setting illegal traps, but the spokesperson expressed frustration that not a great deal can be done about it.. The number of illegal traps seized represents only a small proportion of the problem, he says.

Crab research within the department has been stepped up this year, in an effort to understand what is happening. For a few years in the mid-1980s the DFO set a "protective" quota of around 26,000 tonnes, although DFO managers admitted that, because snow crab was a new fishery, there wasn't enough biological data available to make such a quota meaningful. It corresponded, in fact, to what fishermen were already landing. In 1988, there was no quota set.

DFO scientist Dr. Gerard Conan, using scientific language, explains what is happening as "the cropping down of the accumulated biomass." When the fishery first started, fishermen were landing crab that had been there for, perhaps, decades. Now, all that old crab is gone, and the fishery will have to depend on what is produced each year.

A rough rule of thumb, Dr. Conan says, is that after the "cropping down" of a virgin population, landings drop to one-third to one-half of the original level. That means that the crab fishery could stabilize at between 10,000 and 16,000 tonnes per year, although there are still a lot of gaps in scientific knowledge about crab. As well, there was crab being landed this year that had never had a chance to reproduce. So, given all the uncertainties, scientists are unsure what the future holds for the resource.

It's clear, though, that a level of 10 to 16,000 tonnes is not enough to support the 80-boat fleet at the lifestyle to which many crab fishermen have grown accustomed. It's obvious that there are bound to be major confrontations if they try to enter the groundfish or herring fisheries, both of which already have too much capacity. There aren't, however, many choices.

Nor is 10 to 16,000 tonnes enough to provide employment for all those who have worked in the onshore plants from the beginning. These women, in a sense, are the true victims. Having never really profited from the crab klondike in the first place, they now face a future filled with uncertainty, and over which they have little control. •

Sue Calhoun is a journalist in Shediac. New Brunswick.

Another Approach: Sharing the Wealth

The number of crab licenses on the Acadian Peninsula has varied only slightly over the past decade. The Association Professionelle des Pêcheurs Acadiens (APPA) has fought hard to maintain its monopoly on crab in the north. That the province's crab fishery has been restricted to 80 midshore boats is something that has always been opposed by the Maritime Fishermen's Union, a group representing inshore fishermen. "We've always maintained that the DFO has created a fishery of millionaires," says MFU organizer Reginald Comeau. The end result, in fact, has been the creation of a dramatic situation: in 1983, 80 midshore boats landed one-third of the value of all fish and seafood landed in New Brunswick, while the approximately 5,000 inshore fishermen (along with offshore vessels in other fisheries) shared the other two-thirds.

In contrast, consider the experience of inshore crab fishermen in Cape Breton. There are two inshore zones in Cape Breton, zone 19 (from the Port of Margaree north to the 4Vn line) and zone 18 (from the Port of Margaree south to St. George's Bay). These boats have been on individual quotas since the late 1970s.

In 1984, there were 27 license holders in zone 19, each with a boat quota of 82,000 pounds. Because crab prices were increasing, these fishermen agreed to reduce their individual quotas to 50,000 pounds, in order to allow the DFO to grant 34 new licenses.

This year, in zone 18, the 23 existing license holders agreed to allow their individual quotas to drop from 60,000 to 55,000 pounds, in order to allow four more fishermen into the fishery.

"This is a unique situation where fishermen have agreed to reduce their quotas so that others can share in the fishery," says a DFO spokesperson. One of the reasons, he says, is that these inshore men hold other licenses while some of the midshore crabbers have only crab licenses.

Still, it's a different approach than that taken by crab fishermen in northern New Brunswick.

Who Judges the Judges?

A Comment on the Marshall Inquiry

Robert Wall

"Justice," John Galsworthy once remarked, "is a machine that when some one has once given it the starting push, rolls on of itself." In the case of Donald Marshall Jr., "injustice" would be the more appropriate word. By any yardstick imaginable, the justice system in Nova Scotia failed him miserably.

The reasons offered for the system's failure are as varied as the witnesses — 103 to date — who have appeared before the "Royal Commisison on the Donald Marshall Jr. Prosecution." Every part of the justice system stands accused of having a hand in putting the sixteen-year-old Micmac youth behind penitentiary bars for a crime he did not commit, and keeping him there for eleven long years.

And when Marshall was finally released from prison, the machinery of injustice just kept rolling. The Nova Scotia Court of Appeals ruled Marshall was "not guilty" but added that Marshall, not the system, was to blame for his conviction and imprisonment. Ruling that "any miscarriage of Justice is more apparent than real," the learned judges condemned Marshall for untruthfulness and cited him as the cause of his own misfortune.

The comments blaming Marshall for his own predicament became ammunition for the province's negotiator, who was intent on paying the least compensation possible for wrongful imprisonment. Adding even more insult to injury, former Deputy Attorney General Gordon Coles testified at the Royal Commission's hearings that Marshall's ultimate acquittal after eleven years in jail was evidence that the justice system was in good working order.

The irony of blaming the victim while praising the system was heightened by the presence of Justice Leonard Pace on the appeal court panel. Pace was Attorney General (and therefore chief law officer) of the province when Marshall was convicted and sentenced in 1971. One witness testified that he was "99 percent sure" that Pace was aware, within a week of Marshall's conviction, of new evidence that could have won him a new trial. The testimony raises doubts about the impartiality of the panel that found that the system was blameless.

In addition, the decision of the court appears to be based in part on witnesses' affidavits which were never, according to the official transcript, presented to the court for their consideration.

Judicial decisions are supposed to define the issue being considered, assess the applicable law and demonstrate the process by which the findings were made. But the appeal court decision in the Marshall case was like a road map with half the lines left out.

The Royal Commission, in following the tortured path of Donald Marshall Jr. through the Nova Scotia justice system, decided that the appeal court judges were the only ones who could clarify the apparent incongruities in their decision. When the Judges declined to come voluntarily a subpoena was issued to compel their attendance. There then erupted a major battle between the Commissioners and the Court of Appeals, which Chief Justice Constance Glube of the Trial Division of the Supreme Court was eventually asked to referee. (A few weeks before, Glube had ruled that Cabinet ministers could be compelled to violate their solemn oath and answer questions about secret cabinet conversations if the Marshall matter was the subject of these discussions).

Glube was in an unenviable position. The Judges of the Court of Appeals are, in effect, her bosses. They could make her life as a Judge quite uncomfortable if they chose to look closely at any of her cases coming before them on appeal. But to rule against the Royal Commission was to invite public clamour by appearing to shield her fellow judges from scrutiny.

Glube's decision was a masterstroke of the judicial art of balancing. Not only did she quash the subpoena issued by the Commission, she said it would "be wrong" for a judge to testify voluntarily. She added: "A judge *must not* (my emphasis) testify before a commission or court on matters which came before the judge in his or her judicial capacity, even if the judge would like to respond to one or more of the questions which have been publicly raised."

Having ruled in favour of the higher court judges, Glube balanced the scales by asserting that immunity is not a personal privilege, "it is for the benefit of the public."

Cynical commentators laughed that it didn't matter what Glube said. The question would be appealed up the ladder to a higher court. And so it will, although in August the lawyers representing the five appeal court judges refused a request by the Marshall Commission to take this very thorny issue to the Supreme Court of Canada. Instead, the appeal against Glube's decision will be heard in the Nova Scotia Court of Appeals —the very same court in which the five judges sat when they decided Marshall's fate!

The foundation on which Glube built her decision is the Principle of Judicial Independence. Constructing the foundation was easy for her. All parties in the dispute -- the Court of

Appeals, the Royal Commission, the Attorney General who supported the appeal court's position, and Marshall's lawyers -- agreed that judges need to be free from political, governmental and other entanglements that might affect the exercise of judicial functions. All parties agreed that to safeguard their independence, judges should be immune from law suits against them for actions performed and decisions rendered in the performance of their judicial duties. A judge can't be truly independent if he has to worry that he might be dragged into court by disgruntled claimants or, worse, a governmental body upset by a decision. There is a long tradition of common law holding that judges are immune from such treatment. There seems to be a definable public interest in keeping judges above or apart from unwarranted or improper interference with their judicial duties.

But is it in the public interest to say that judges can never be called to account for their action or decisions while on the bench, that judges should be cloaked in total immunity?

In fact and in practice, judges are not totally immune. Decisions can be appealed. Appeal courts can and do overturn lower court judgements for a variety of reasons. Higher court decisions are full of sharp comments (expressed with polite legalistic venom) directed at the inadequacy of lower court judges. And if a judge's personal conduct on the bench, as opposed to the logic of the decision itself, is questioned, the Canadian Judicial Council can be asked to investigate and censure the unseemly behaviour. The Council would of course call the judge to appear and has the authority to subpoena a recalcitrant witness.

Glube suggested that questions which Marshall's lawyers wanted to ask "appear to allege impropriety on the part of some or all of the plaintiffs" (the Appeal Court judges). "If that is the case, the place to deal with such allegations of impropriety is the Canadian Judicial Council established under the *Judges Act*."

Despite Glube's assertion to the contrary, this means that judges are not totally immune. They are only immune from anyone except other judges looking at their behaviour.

Glube's reasoning on behalf of total judicial immunity is contradictory and circular. The Marshall Inquiry was established because of years of public outcry about the apparent miscarriage of justice in the Marshall case. The Commission's job is to find out why the system went wrong and recommend ways to keep it from happening again. The public has been copiously supplied with insights into the workings of all levels of the criminal justice system of Nova Scotia. The public has heard allegations that improprieties also occurred in the Court of Appeals.

And then Glube, citing a 1985 precedent, argues that this very same public is served by judicial immunity: "For this immunity, in the performance of judicial duties, is not for a judge personally, it is for the benefit of the public 'to protect the judicial system against interference or influence which might pervert the course of justice.'"

As a member of the public, neither a lawyer or a judge, my concerns would be alleviated and I would benefit if either: (a)the judges appear and dispel the appearance of impropriety, or (b)the judges appear, are found wanting and actions are taken to protect me and the rest of the public in the future. I see no "interference or influence which might pervert the course of justice" in either of these alternatives.

The appearance of perverse justice arises when a needless barrier of "total immunity" prohibits judges from answering the allegations of impropriety. The entire legal profession is fond of quoting, 'Justice must not only be done, but be seen to be done." Then can justice be seen to be done if judges are unseen?

The Marshall Commission is precisely the kind of forum which can examine the questions raised about the decision of the judges of the Court of Appeals without "denigrating the dignity of their office or impeding their future effectiveness."

The Commissioners given the thankless task of unravelling the twisted fabric of the Nova Scotia justice system have demonstrated admirably-their ability to handle sensitive issues with competence, integrity and, where necessary, discretion. But, they cannot look at all the factors which caused the Marshall travesty if the Appeal Court judges remain in the status of legal limbo.

We began with Galsworthy; let us end with Dickens. The courts, with their mysterious pomp and pageantry, reduce the general public to the status of an awestruck child. And as Dickens wrote in *Great Expectations*, "In the little world in which children have their existence,...there is nothing so finely perceived as injustice." •

Robert Wall, formerly a researcher with the Marshall Inquiry, is writing a major study of the impact of the Marshall case on Nova Scotia.

New Maritimes covers the Maritimes from a fresh, alternative perspective. It has received national and regional awards for the quality of its articles on regional culture and politics.

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The Enigma of African AIDS

Cameron Macgregor

AIDS will change the world in ways we can nowonly scarcely imagine. Officially there are more than 96,000 cases in 136 countries; the actual number of AIDS cases is probably closer to 200,000. Another five to ten million people are infected with the AIDS virus, 1.2 million of whom are expected to develop AIDS itself by the end of 1992.

AIDS is no longer an "epidemic." It has become a "pandemic," meaning that it began in a number of countries almost simultaneously and can now can be found worldwide. No vaccine is in sight; indeed, no single vaccine may ever be able to protect against the virus, since it has several strains. In fact, the fast-mutating AIDS virus may be one of the few viruses capable of actually benefiting from the antibodies generated by a vaccine.

Although the AIDS tragedy has become a common theme in the media, little attention has been paid to the way the disease has been shaped by poverty and dependence — both in the Third World and in North America. Nor have the media said much about the companies who have made millions from AIDS. In both cases, production for profit has worsened an already grave situation.

AIDS has become a major public health issue in Central and Southern Africa — particularly in Burundi, Rwanda, Zaire, Zambia, Tanzania, and Uganda. In the absence of reliable statistics, the exact extent of AIDS in Africa is unknown, but it has been estimated that between one and five million Africans carry the virus.

AIDS is a disease that involves the disastrous weakening of the body's immune system to the point that it succumbs to "opportunistic" infections it would otherwise have been able to resist. AIDS in Africa presents two unusual features. In both Europe and North America, these opportunistic infections include toxoplasmosis (a usually harmless parasitic disease spread by cats and chickens), Kaposi's sarcoma (a skin cancer), and a type of pneumonia. But African AIDS usually doesn't involve any of these diseases. There, patients come down with tuberculosis, meningitis, skin diseases, or ailments of the stomach or digestive system.

A second distinguishing feature of African AIDS is that the number of females reported with the illness is approximately the same as that of males. Homosexuality and intravenous drug use do not appear to be associated with African AIDS, which appears to hit sexually active heterosexuals hardest.

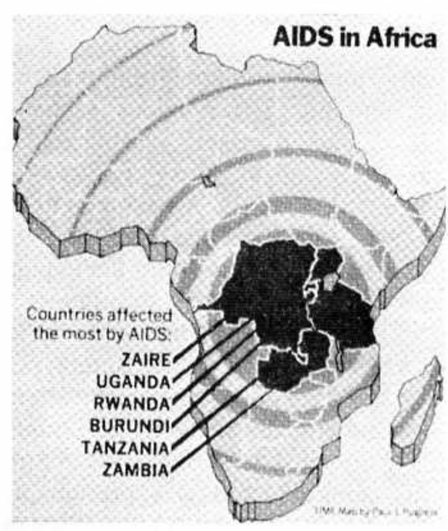
African females who have AIDS tend to be younger than infected males, and are often single. AIDS can be transmitted from an infected pregnant mother to the fetus and there are consequently many more children with AIDS in Africa than there are here.

It is easier to note these facts than to explain them. Some researchers dispute whether AIDS in Africa is a primarily sexually transmitted disease at all. In areas where malaria is epidemic, positive AIDS tests may in fact be registering malaria. Where AIDS is clearly evident, such researchers argue that it makes more sense to look at the contamination of the African blood supply. Transfusions to alleviate anemia in children, for example, probably also often infect them with the AIDS virus.

On the other hand, some studies seem to show that, in common with European and American cases, Africans who have the AIDS virus frequently have a history of sexually transmitted diseases and appear to be more sexually active than those without AIDS.

The impact of AIDS on African prostitutes, for example, is known to have been devastating. The incidence of AIDS is higher for those with a history of previous sexually transmitted diseases, due to remaining lesions and injury. (Female circumcision, common in some parts of Africa, is thought by some researchers to play a contributing role as well.)

In this analysis, the roots of AIDS lie in the political economy of underdevelopment. African labour markets



typically pull male workers away from their families and compel them to travel — often for hundreds of miles — to the production site. This migrant labour system has been devastating for families; male workers are concentrated in certain areas, and denied the support they might otherwise obtain from family. Throughout most of this patriarchal world — including the mining frontiers of Canada — sexual imbalances created by this kind of production system generate prostitution. Long before AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases were a serious problem in Africa.

No one questions that poverty has made African AIDS a more serious problem. Transfusions are commonly used in Africa to treat anemia and they will long continue to put children at risk of AIDS, because no African jurisdiction can afford to test its entire blood supply. Nor can African governments afford to supply populations with the condoms that have been shown to reduce the risk of AIDS. And as Dr. Cecile DeSweemer, who works as a health service co-ordinator in Zaire, recently told the *United Church Observer,* "If people don't have enough money for one square meal a day, you don't seriously expect them to have money for condoms."

Malnutrition, malaria, and measles are epidemic in countries where food supplies are scarce because of drought and the production of food for external markets. Unsterile injections, combined with immune sys-

Burroughs Wellcome has found there is good money to be made from AIDS

tem damage resulting from malaria, malnutrition, and previous sexually transmitted diseases, establishes a population of both sexes particularly vulnerable to AIDS. A background of poor health means that those who get AIDS have a much shorter life expectancy than North American sufferers.

As in North America, AIDS in Africa has stimulated vicious stereotypes and bigotry. For example, some scientists and virtually all the media bought the theory that AIDS originated in African monkeys, and was presumably spread to the Caribbean by Haitians or Cubans. There is no evidence to support this theory. The first African cases were discovered shortly after the first diagnosis of AIDS occurred in United States, and at the same time as its appearance in Haiti and other countries. Nor are monkeys suffering from the same disease as humans. Such rumours and stereotypes have hurt the tourist industry, promoted discrimination against Africans travelling to other countries, and contributed to racist stereotypes of African sexuality.

Poverty and dependence have shaped the experience of AIDS in North America as well. Gay and bisexual men continue to suffer the worst effects of AIDS, as well as the burden of a popular perception of AIDS as a disease confined to the "unclean" and "deviant." But while AIDS continues to be seen as a "gay disease" (inaccurately, of course, in the international context), the North American reality is rapidly shifting. The percentage of gays in the total of all AIDS cases has declined, partly as a result of the gay community's successful and inventive response to its own health crisis.

DAILY NEWS

Angry bishop speaks out

'AIDS COULD END US ALL'

Story on page 2

The girl daddy tried to sell

Four-year-old Rachal Rauser, whose father allegedly tried to sell her for

Radical America

The emerging reality seems to indicate a connection between poverty, race, and AIDS. Although black and Hispanic gay or bisexual men are disproportionately at risk of AIDS, by March, 1987, the New York Health Commission was reporting that 70% of women with AIDS were black or Hispanic, as were 93% of children suffering from the disease. Black and Hispanic heterosexual men who are intravenous drug users are over 20 times more likely than white users to contract AIDS. Over 90% of infants with AIDS are non-white.

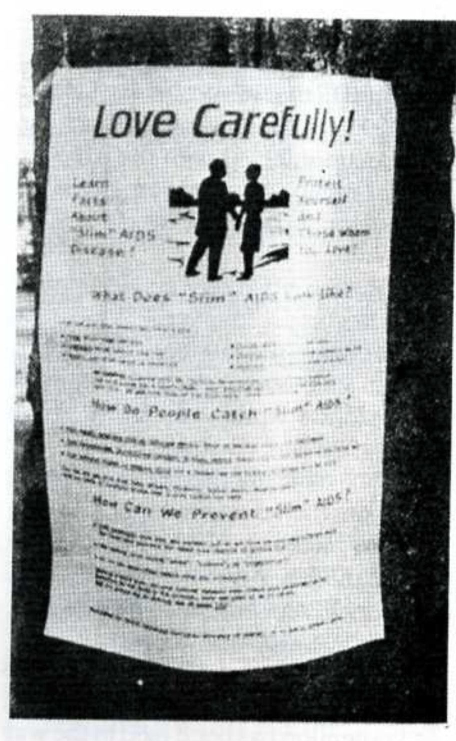
These populations are particularly ill-served by middle-class prescriptions of monogamy and the individualistic emphasis on "life-style." Monogamy is no protection, for instance, for Latina women who are ex-

pected to play a passive and docile role in relationships influenced by *machismo*.

And an emphasis on an individual's avoidance of risk factors, sensible on one level, can obscure the contributions of such social factors as racism, poverty and despair. Diseases are not just natural phenomenon; they are socially shaped. It appears that one of the things shaping AIDS is poverty and previous health problems.

AIDS hasn't been a bad thing for everyone.

There is money to be made in blood screening (about $150 million a year in the U.S.) and condoms.Or consider the case of Burroughs Wellcome, which markets the drug azidothymidine (AZT) under the trade



Radical America

name Retrovir; AZT was licensed in March 1987 as the only drug so far proved effective against the AIDS virus.

It is now the highest-priced medication in North America. Americans with AIDS may be charged as much as $36,000 a year for AZT by retail pharmacists. Naturally, the stock of Burroughs Wellcome has soared.

Pharmaceutical companies normally justify their prices by noting the research and development they carry out before making their products. In this case, though, AZT was discovered and tested (as an anti-cancer drug) in 1964 at public expense.

In 1986, the only clinical trials using AZT on humans were abandoned and the drug was approved.

Since the company did not discover or develop the drug, how can its staggeringly high price possibly be justified?

Business will wring profits from the twentieth century's most fearful disease, and from those most likely to be attacked: the poor and the marginalized in the Third and First worlds. •

Rethinking the Welfare State in the Maritimes

Hard Times

Commentary by Rick Williams on the Maritime Economy

The social services systems in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are unfair and inadequate. Hostility to the client is a feature of both. (My two earlier columns on "Malign Neglect" in the March and June-July issues of *New Maritimes* describe how both systems have failed the public.)

In Nova Scotia, the provincial government has maintained an outmoded delivery system based on municipal responsibility for short-term assistance. The province has stubbornly perpetuated a system of settlement which dates back to the Elizabethan poor laws of the early 1600s — a system that has been abolished in every other province of Canada. It determines that a person is the financial responsibility of the municipal unit in which s/he has (or last had) "settlement" or permanent residence. Municipalities are allowed to deny or limit assistance to people defined as "non-residents." Some Nova Scotia municipalities simply don't have the revenues to pay for assistance programs. Others, lacking this excuse, are stingy because they are governed by extreme anti-welfare attitudes.

The result is a patchwork system with serious inequalities from district to district. In comparison with Statistics Canada's poverty line of an annual income of $11,850 for a two-person family in 1985, a single mother in Nova Scotia received $8,100 per year ($673 per month) in provincial Family Benefits. The same mother on municipal assistance would receive an average of approximately $5,220 per year ($435 per month). As a study by the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers has shown, the rates for all social assistance payments are 45% to 67% below the Statistics Canada poverty line. None of Nova Scotia's provincial or municipal programs adjusts adequately or automatically for inflation. Social workers also pay for the long-running crisis in the welfare system: the average child welfare caseload in Nova Scotia was estimated at 55.4 per worker in 1980, almost double the average caseload per worker in Ontario.

The refusal of the Nova Scotia government to modernize the social services is evidence of the low priority attached to social welfare. The province has been able to use the split in responsibilities as an excuse for blocking basic reform.

The New Brunswick picture is different, but no less bleak. New Brunswick has used a strategy of "reform" and "restructuring" to cut costs. The government of Louis Robichaud took over welfare services formerly handled by municipalities in the 1960s and set up unified provincial programs. In 1976, a separate division within the social services bureaucracy exclusively devoted to income maintenance was established.; in 1987, income maintenance became the responsibility of a separate government department.

As a result of these "reforms," the influence of case workers in the welfare system has been reduced. Closing down services, "decentralizing" them, and shifting service delivery responsibilities from qualified professional workers to volunteers and the community, have been key elements in a drive to minimize welfare. According to comparisons done regularly by the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, New Brunswick has just about the worst record of any province in Canada when it comes to providing for the poor. In 1985, New Brunswick ranked eighth among the provinces for a single-parent family with one child, tenth for a family of four, ninth for a single, employable person, and tenth for a single disabled person. The government has found money for one growth area within the welfare system: coercion. Special constables have been hired to search out welfare fraud, and to look for male shoes under the beds of single women on assistance.

Quietly, with little media fanfare or controversy, New Brunswick has followed a strategy that is just as extreme in content and design as the notoriously anti-welfare policies of the British Columbia and Alberta governments.

Defenders of the status quo in the two provinces argue that the major problem is the fiscal poverty of Maritime governments. They insist that little can be done until either the regional economy makes some miraculous recovery or the federal government dramatically increases fiscal transfers.

There is some truth to this position, but it also serves to blind us to possible alternatives within the current situation. It certainly is the case that the high unemployment and low income levels in the Maritimes simultaneously create greater demands for services while reducing the tax revenues that pay for them. Due to this intensifying process of "fiscal crisis," it is difficult for the poorer provinces to increase social spending in line with economic decline without compensating federal dollars. Since the federal government has been implementing its own restraint policies since the late 1970s, there hasn't been much room to move.

Yes, it would be nice to have a lot more money to spend, but even in the richer provinces they have not been able to eradicate poverty or make dependence on social welfare a less stigmatizing experience with their higher spending levels. The root problem lies in the fundamental goals of the social welfare system in a capitalist society.

Here in the Maritimes we cannot unilaterally change federal government policies, and we have only a limited ability to influence the world capitalist system, but there are things we can do. Let's look at one basic alternative.

Any way you look at it, the solution to the poverty problem in an advanced technological society with high structural unemployment is a guaranteed adequate annual income (GAAI). By

this I mean an income which is automatically delivered to people, whether employed or not, who fall below a certain threshold and which fully provides for their food, shelter, clothing, and personal development needs.

Such a system would replace all existing income support programmes from disability allowance to old age security to social assistance. The savings achieved through collapsing all these services into one would help significantly in paying for the improved benefit levels. The automatic delivery system, geared to income tax reporting or to some new system of regular income monitoring, would help considerably in removing the stigma which currently results from means tests, needs assessments, home visits, and other demeaning control methods.

It is obvious that the Maritime Provinces could not afford such a system, and we cannot force the federal government to set one up. We could, however, go a long way towards laying the groundwork, and get substantial federal aid for a new approach.

The three Maritime provinces could undertake a joint development program to establish uniform services and a skeletal GAAI system in each province. This would involve the provincial takeover of all municipal services, the collapsing of all income maintenance services into single programmes in each province, and the establishment of uniform standards, eligibility thresholds and benefit levels geared to cost of living. Ways would have to be built into the system to account for the impact of federal programmes such as unemployment insurance and old age pensions.

Once such a system was in place, the politics of social welfare in the region would change dramatically. At present, there are two sources of revenue to pay for social services in the Maritimes: the federal government, and wealthy people within the Maritimes (who often pay little or no taxes) . Because of the complexity of the current welfare system, both these groups can duck responsibilities to pay more to the victims of social and economic policies that mainly benefit the rich.

Hard Times

If, when all was said and done, such a rationalized and efficient system could only provide clients with benefits which averaged 60% of the poverty line figure at current spending levels, a progressive government in Nova Scotia or Prince Edward Island could make a much stronger case for higher taxes and/or more federal fiscal transfers. Nothing will really change with regard to poverty until we are able to make the rich pay, and encourage the whole community to take greater responsibility for social inequalities and all their negative consequences.

Once a more generous and rational system was in place on the provincial level, there would also be much greater leverage to force the federal government to move in the direction of a GAAI and to integrate their income transfer programmes into such a system. In the long run, such a system will not work to eradicate poverty in our region until it is set up and financed on a national level.

> There is little evidence that Maritimers or Canadians in general share any solid commitment to right-wing visions of a dog-eat-dog, survival-of-the-fattest kind of society

All of this implies considerable change in the current political atmosphere regarding social programmes. We have just gone through a decade in which the limited gains made in reducing social inequalities during the 1950s and 1960s have been substantially reversed.

Real incomes for low and middle income people have declined, and the gap between the rich and the poor has been widening.

The general public may have been willing for a while to swallow such bitter medicine out of their disillusionment with the liberal welfare state and its failure to bring economic and social stability.

There is little evidence, however, that Maritimers or Canadians in general share any solid commitment to right-wing visions of a dog-eat-dog, survival-of-the-fattest kind of society.

In the Maritimes we need a new kind of politics regarding social welfare issues. While fear and hatred of "the welfare" is deeply rooted, and works well to discipline the working poor, we also have strong traditions of social solidarity, community self-reliance and authentic charity which offset these more negative influences.

Progressive groups, both inside and outside the formal political process, need to put before Maritimers a clear picture of what's wrong with the current system, and then describe concrete alternatives which aim at equality and social justice. What is most lacking at present is the political leadership with the courage and the imagination to confront the issues and to educate the community about the need and the possibilities for real reform. •

Rick Williams teaches political economy in Halifax. "Hard Times" is the new name for his regular New Maritimes *economics column; it was formerly called "Jabs, Jabs, Jabs."*

NOTICES

Here's three October events to mark on your calendar:
The Annual Meeting of the New Maritimes Editorial Council will be held on Sunday, October 2, at 1 p..m, in Room 302 of the Dalhousie Student Union Building, Halifax. This meeting will discuss the restructuring of the editorial board, the transition to the new format, and the magazine's editorial policy.If you are interested in participating, please let us know and a copy of the annual report will be sent to you before the meeting.

A less formal discussion about the future of *New Maritimes* and its contribution to the culture of the region will be held on Saturday afternoon (October), as part of the Atlantic Workshop..Please phone *New Maritimes* at 425-6622 if you would like further details.

Finally, at 4 p..m.on Sunday 2 October (after the annual meeting) we will be holding a barbecue in the yard behind 2364-2372 Agricola St. Let us know if you can attend.

The Percy Dares Memorial Prize Society

Percy Dares was born in Chaswood, Halifax Co., N.S., on 12 May 1923. Educated in Dartmouth, he served in the Royal Canadian Volunteer Reserve during the War. In later years, he worked as an electrician and a tavern operator.

Percy maintained a life-long commitment to social democracy and was and was a strong suppoerter of the CCF and its successor, the NDP. He was active in Dartmouth municipal politics and ran twice for the NDP in provincial elections. Percy supported the NDP financially as well as morally, and was proud of its accomplishments. In 1985, he was made a life member of the NDP.

Percy Dares died on September 25, 1986. His life was a life of service to others. The Percy Dares Memorial Prize Society was formed "to promote the principles of community service for one's fellow members of society," at each of three Dartmouth area high schools.

Membership in the Percy Dares Memorial Prize Society costs five dollars. If you would like more information, or if you wish to join the Society, please write to:

The Percy Dares Memorial Prize Society
52 Bella Vista Drive, Dartmouth, N.S. B2W 2X3

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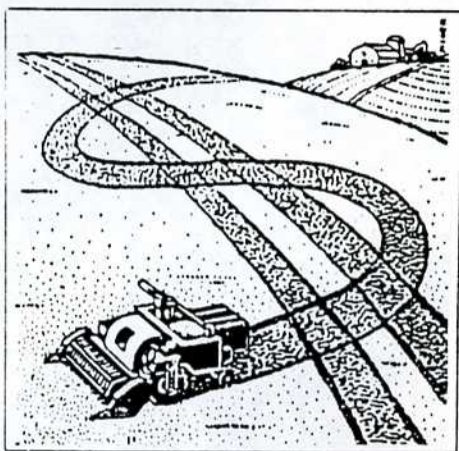

Mark S. Fisher

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The Trials of Eric Smith

by Erin Goodman

The Dennis building in downtown Halifax, a grey architectural horror from the early twentieth century, sits across from the Nova Scotia Legislature. Though it is uninspiring and inelegant, it has one big advantage: the

Cape Sable Islanders meet: Should Eric Smith return to his classroom?

©Fred Hatfield Photo

government can easily keep a watchful eye over whatever goes on inside its walls.

A slow elevator ride takes you up to the sixth-floor offices — which are spacious and mostly empty. A receptionist greets you out front; several researchers work, out of sight, in back rooms.

The office walls are adorned with dozens of posters depicting the dangers of, and myths about, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The man who collects the posters points out a European acquisition featuring two men nestled together, and comments, "The Nova Scotia government would never go for a poster like that."

Eric Smith works full time for the AIDS Task Force, which was created in October, 1987, to study the ramifications of the disease and make recommendations on policy formation. The 27 additional members of the Task Force were appointed from such bodies as the Board of Education, the Metro Area Committee on AIDS, and the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour. They contribute to the Task Force to the extent that their regular careers will allow, while Eric is here all day, simply because, he says, he has "nothing else to do."

The quiet of the office must seem strange to this thirty-year-old former school teacher. The phone rings occasionally, mostly, with calls from friends and family. He has plenty of time to reflect on the circumstances that took him out of the classroom a year ago, plunging him into a glare of media attention. For the moment, Eric Smith is in quarantine

Cape Sable Island, off the southwestern coast of Nova Scotia, is joined to the mainland by a causeway that is often shrouded in fog. The unpredictable weather is a popular topic of conversation among Islanders.

Archelaus Smith was the first English-speaking settler on the island. He came with his family in 1764 to exploit some of the richest grounds in North America. He was soon followed by other families. The residents built homes scattered across the island. Many were easily accessible only by sea. The settlers' sense of isolation was relieved by their religion, and the Bible served as the Islanders' only literary diversion for many years.

The community remained small, close-knit, and almost totally dependent on fishing and wooden boatbuilding. The Island became famous for its fishing boats, especially for the "Cape Islander," which has long been a popular design with inshore fishermen along the province's seacoast.

Some aspects of life on Cape Sable Island have not changed much over the past century. Like most of the South Shore, Cape Sable Island has not attracted or developed many secondary industries. Many young people, today as in previous generations, leave the island for work in far-off places. The population has barely doubled over the past century, and fishing and boat-building continue to employ most of the people who choose to stay.

But there is a new prosperity on Cape Sable Island these days, thanks to its advantages as a fishing centre. Islanders are some of the most successful inshore fishermen in North America. In addition to many boat-yards and piles of lobster traps, a visitor will notice the tell-tale signs of rural prosperity: satellite dishes, new houses, and all-terrain vehicles dot the landscape. The value of sea-fish landings in Shelburne County in 1985 was $68,975,000, exceeding even the figure recorded for Lunenburg County's more famous fishing industry. Income levels in the area are on the rise: the average family income in Clark's Harbour, the island's largest community, was higher in 1981 ($22,691) than the provincial average ($21,872).

Economic prosperity in the past decade has not, though, erased the deep social scars left by a century of underdevelopment. Out of a sample drawn by Statistics Canada from Shelburne County as a whole in 1981, 31.3% of the population had less than a Grade Ten education. (Provincially, the figure is much lower, at only 20.3%.) On the upper end of the education scale, only 7.1% of the Shelburne County sample had the benefit of a university education, compared to 15.3% in Nova Scotia generally.

A heavy reliance on small-craft fishing has fostered a strong spirit of entrepreneurship and a fierce independence that sets Islanders apart from other Nova Scotians. Kent Blades, editor of the *Guardian*, Clark's Harbour's weekly newspaper, points to the slogan on his masthead — "Voice of a People Proud" — as a reflection of the stubborn, independent nature of the islanders. "I think local people have a very distinctive value system," he says. "They're upfront about what they believe, and to a large extent, they don't care about how the world sees them."

Eric Smith is, as they say on Cape Sable Island, "of the people." He is an eighth-generation Islander and a direct descendant of Archelaus Smith. Along with his parents and three younger sisters, Eric has an extended family of aunts and uncles and countless cousins. He is probably related, in one way or another, to almost everyone on the island.

His parents are quiet, shy people. His father is a building supervisor for the Municipality of Barrington, and his mother is a homemaker. Eric's family is not particularly religious, but he received a good Baptist upbringing, participating in choir and other church activities. Both his parents have stood loyally behind their son, without being drawn into the swirl of controversy that has recently descended upon him.

When he was about 12 years old, Eric began to think of himself as being gay, and this made him feel cut off from other people. "Realizing that this was not something that was generally accepted, I tended to just isolate myself, normally staying around the house," he recalls. "This was safe territory." Eric did not try to hide the fact that he was gay from his parents; he did not, for example, take particular pains to conceal his gay literature from them. Their acceptance of his sexual orientation was gradual but complete.

But in the community at large, it was a different matter. Some knew, some suspected, some had no idea. "As long as the issue is not forced on people," comments Eric, "they can kind of turn a blind eye to it."

At Barrington Municipal High School, Eric found himself set slightly apart from other students. In Grade Ten, he became the first boy in the school's history to take home economics instead of industrial arts. (He had to get a special note of permission from his parents for this.) It was here, in home economics class, that he received the best sex education he has ever received — all from a woman's perspective. One presentation he fondly remembers giving that year was on the "Irregularity of Menstrual Cycles."

Eric wanted to teach. At the age of 17, after graduating from high school, he left for Teachers' College in Truro, still "in the closet." For two of his three years in Truro he was involved in a relationship with a woman.

He returned home in 1978 to teach at Clark's Harbour Elementary, a school built by his grandfather. Eric loved it. In addition to the regular curriculum, Eric thought it was important to bring out the moral issues involved in day-to-day life, and to help children appreciate the need for tolerance. "We seemed to do more than most classes did on teaching individuality," he remembers. "Kids would use terms like 'nigger' or 'Jew' or 'fruit'.... Most of what we would end up talking about is that everyone is different in one way or another."

Katrina Swendseid

Sex education is first seriously broached in Nova Scotia in Grade Six, which Eric taught. He was careful to follow the official curriculum, concentrating on reproduction and puberty. If children wanted to talk about birth control or abortion, he remembers, "I told them they'd have to talk to their parents about it at home." In his nine years of teaching at the school, he received one complaint about sex education — from a mother upset that her child had seen a film showing puppies being born.

Eric looks back on those years with fond emotions. He loved his job, and he gradually grew out of the self-imposed shell of his teen years. He started to participate more in the community. Although his family tradition is Liberal, neither of his parents were especially interested in the political life on the island. Eric, though, had been introduced to politics at the age of twelve by his father's sister, whom he remembers as the type "who was always out at Liberal meetings and at the polls." Now, he plunged into Liberal Party work on the island, and even served for a year as president of the Shelburne County Liberal Association.

It was through his involvement in the Liberal Party that Eric first came to know the Halifax gay/lesbian community. Eric often travelled to Halifax to attend Liberal meetings, and during the evenings, he would go with friends to Rumours, the city's gay club. Although Eric did not publicize this aspect of his life back home on the Island, he realized that many people in the community were aware of his gayness. At the time, it did not seem to matter.

"I guess it surprised me when the gay thing started to become an issue," says Eric. "I was president of the (local chapter) of the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union, I was president of the Home and School Association for three years, and president of the Liberal Association for a year, but people managed to overlook it."

(This attitude toward homosexuality has prevailed for many years in most Maritime communities. Gays in small towns and villages have been known to their fellows as, perhaps, "odd," and might be the subject of a knowing wink or chuckle among the townspeople. But, as long as a person's orientation and practice weren't overt, he or she could often play an important role in the community.)

Eric thinks he was exposed to the AIDS virus at the February, 1986 Nova Scotia Liberal leadership convention. Although he was well-informed about AIDS and had been practicing safe sex (sex without the exchange of bodily fluids, often with a condom) for several years, Eric and a convention observer from Ontario briefly ignored the safe sex guidelines.

In September, 1986, Eric visited Dr. Ian Cree, a physician and surgeon at Roseway Hospital in Shelburne, to be treated for venereal warts. After Dr. Cree warned him to stay away from the ladies, Eric made the off-hand remark that, as a gay, he did not think he would find that to be a problem. Without his knowledge or consent, Dr. Cree decided to test Eric for the AIDS virus.

Today, Dr. Cree stands behind that decision. He says it is critical to identify carriers and stresses that confidentiality should be maintained so as not to discourage people from being tested and seeking treatment.

But in Eric's case, confidentiality was completely compromised. Roseway Hospital had never before dealt with a case of AIDS, and rather than using codes to identify patients, the hospital displayed Eric's name on medical charts for all the nurses, lab technicians, doctors, and receptionists to see.

"There is no hope of confidentiality in a small community," comments Dr. John McCurdy, Eric's personal physician at the Causeway Medical Centre in nearby Barrington Passage. Even though the media have blamed Dr. McCurdy's secretary for leaking the news about Eric's condition (she was allegedly concerned for the welfare of a granddaughter scheduled to enter Grade Primary at Clark's Harbour Elementary School in the fall of 1987), Dr. McCurdy says rumours were flying around long before his secretary said anything and believes that the blame was really shared by everyone at the clinic, "because we hadn't had a case before... Eric was really a victim of the fact that we didn't have a system in place for AIDS." Eric has asked Dr. McCurdy not to take any action against his secretary for the leak.

By the last weeks of the 1986-87 school year, Eric's private life was a public affair, and he felt that the Shelburne County District School Board had to be formally told the facts of the case. When he explained the situation to them, the Board immediately asked Eric to go on sick leave for the remainder of the 1986-87 school year.

Eric resisted this initial effort to get him out of the classroom. He had been assured by medical experts in Halifax that there was no danger of his transmitting the disease to his pupils, and he stayed on in the classroom until the end of the school year.

"It was very pleasant that month," Eric says of teaching that last June. Outside in the community rumours were flying, but inside the classroom things seemed fine. His fellow staff members were all supportive. The children were relaxed. The only difference Eric noticed was that they would ask after his health more often. "They'd often ask, 'Are you feeling okay?' They had no fear at that time. Nobody started doing poorly in their work."

"I guess I got the impression that, okay, maybe this isn't going to be a problem."

It was a quiet summer. Eric was away from Cape Sable during most of it, unaware of the storm of controversy brewing among the Islanders.

Cape Sable Island has a strong Baptist tradition. There are nine churches on the island — five United Baptist, two Independent Baptist, one Advent Christian, and one Pentecostal. The Baptist faith was brought to Shelburne County by early settlers, in particular Asa McGray, who founded the first church on Cape Sable Island, the Free Will Baptist Church, at Centreville, in 1821.

Roland K. McCormick, a former Baptist minister, a resident authority on Baptist tradition in the Cape Sable area and a retired school teacher who taught Eric Grade Seven English at Barrington Municipal High School, remarks, "The United Baptists now in Shelburne are probably more conservative than the Convention (the Atlantic Baptist Convention, the regional umbrella organization of United Baptist churches) as a whole." Fishermen, he adds, take their religion seriously, because they see it as "something you live by."

Many Cape Islanders harbour traditional Baptist values. They believe that homosexuality is a sin, abortion is a sin, sex before marriage is a sin, and that people who commit any of these sins will receive punishment from God.

But grafted on to the tree of these long-held, traditional beliefs is a new, more malign branch. Technology and relative prosperity in the past decade have led to the spread of powerful satellite dishes on many an island front lawn. The right-wing, radical fundamentalism of the American South has made its way into Cape Sable living rooms and has brought changes to many islander's religious outlooks. Whereas the traditional, more rooted religious beliefs held that, yes, many practices are sinful, they also generally held that the sinner would receive divine retribution, and that he or she should most appropriately be treated with compassion, or at least pity. The fire of late twentieth-century American fundamentalism has, to a certain extent, replaced those softer emotions with the harsher ones of scorn and derision.

This new and less tolerant religious attitude was first evident in the early 1980s, when an American group, the North East Kingdom Community Church, moved to Cape Sable. Preaching a back-to-the-land simplicity, the cult provoked an immediate and violent reaction from some residents.

"Some of the 'good Christians' in the area decided they didn't want the cult there," Eric remembers. According to him, Community Church members lived by values that stressed compassion and concern for their fellow citizens. They ran a machine shop, did house repairs, and sold the fish they caught and the bread they baked. "People were saying, 'Our businesses are going to be wiped out,'" says Eric. "The public meetings began. At one point, a group of islanders tried to pressure Immigration officials in Halifax to throw the cult out of the country." The harassment eventually drove the cult across the causeway to nearby Barrington Passage.

The Island's educational system had recently been almost as unsettled as its religious life. The local School Board wanted to reorganize the Island's two elementary schools by putting the lower grades in the Clark's Harbour school and the upper grades in Centreville. They encountered a furious storm of protest from many parents, who took the School Board to court, and ultimately lost.

Another controversy confronting the School Board about the same time was the issue of AIDS education. Reverend Robert Trites of Calvary Baptist Church in Woods Harbour, along with another clergyman, submitted a proposal to the Shelburne County District School Board, calling for religious views regarding AIDS to accompany the Board's own AIDS curriculum. The Board denied the request unanimously, feeling that the proposed course — entitled the "Judeo-Christian View: Male-Female Relationships" — was inappropriate and insufficiently grounded in medical facts. [See box,p.24].

By the last half of the 1980s, Cape Sable society had recently been through some stormy seas. New, harsher religious values were competing with older, more humane ones. The community had been exposed, and reacted to, new and different people in their midst. Issues of education had been on the top of the community's agenda. Into this charged atmosphere walked Eric Smith, Cape Sable Islander and teacher, now shown to have been exposed to the AIDS virus.

During the summer of 1987, residents of Cape Sable Island and surrounding areas started to take new interest in a topic that, for most of them, had seemed, until then far removed from their daily lives: AIDS.

Although news of Eric's test results had not yet been publicly confirmed, the Shelburne County District School Board started receiving phone calls from parents concerned about the threat of AIDS to their children. As September approached and rumours spread, the ranks of angry Cape Sable Island parents swelled. Still smarting from having lost their court case on school re-organiza-

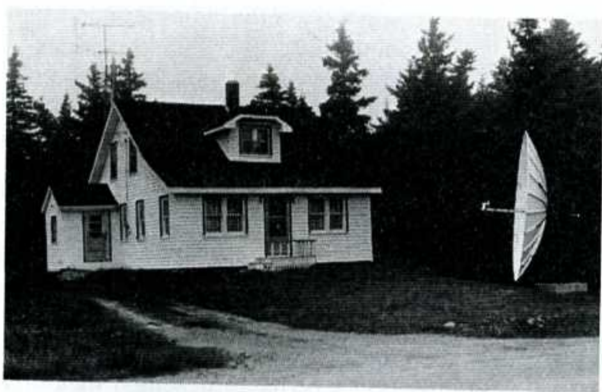
tion, many parents threatened to pull their children out of the classroom and to set up a private school of their own.

The School Board was caught between these outraged parents and its contractual obligation to one of its own employees. Eric had made it clear he was going to fight to stay in the classroom. "If they want a good scrap, I will give it to them," he said, when the parents' campaign began to mount "I'm going to be in that classroom 'til the School Board tells me to leave."

Finally, one week before the September opening of school in 1987, the School Board decided to ignore the advice of the province's leading experts on the disease. Without consulting Eric, it issued a press release, saying an unnamed teacher at a Cape Sable Island school had the AIDS virus, and would be transferred to a non-teaching position in the fall. Eric first became aware of the Board's action when his telephone began to ring.

"That was the easiest way to get word to parents that their concerns had been looked after," he says now. "But I think the School Board should have shown some leadership."

Eric found no more support from the local church.



One of the most difficult problems he faced was trying to explain his situation to the people he was closest to, such as his Grandmother Smith. She asked him to visit her minister for help. Eric visited the minister, although more to thank him for easing his grandmother's mind than to seek spiritual guidance for himself. The visit did not go well. The minister did not tell Eric directly to change his sexual orientation, but asked him instead if he was interested "in putting more emphasis on religion in my life." Eric told him that "as far as the God he was telling me about, I wasn't interested in that God." He then felt his privacy had been further violated when he thought he recognized details of this private conversation mentioned later in a letter in the *Guardian*. "I'm beginning to have a lot of negative feelings about ministers lately," he now says. "A lot of things that we discussed have become public knowledge."

After the start of the school year, Eric's battle to be reinstated was intensified by the glare of media attention. He turned to the Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU) for help. Eric confidently expected to be backed up by the Union, whose policy — adopted in May 1987 — was that "teachers infected with AIDS should have the right to continue their employment." Like the School Board, however, the NSTU issued a press release on Eric's case without consulting him, suggesting that the Union would not contest the decision to reassign him.

"I'm rather awestruck by this whole thing," Eric said on this occasion. The NSTU, he said, "should be making an issue of this so that other School Boards won't make this decision." The problem lay in the way the Union interpreted the word "employment." Union policy stated that teachers with AIDS could continue their employment, but it was not clear that they had the right to remain in the classroom.

Eric felt that a teacher out of the classroom was not a teacher, and was not really being employed. If he were forced to take non-teaching work, his rights were not being guaranteed at all. The NSTU claimed that its policy was to encourage teachers with AIDS to keep teaching, but, Eric remarks, "That's their policy, but in my experience they're not willing to go to bat for it. They urged me not to fight, but to try to settle."

The NSTU finally came up with a proposal to compensate Eric, but the proposed settlement — between $160,000 and $200,000 — proved to be too rich for the School Board's purse.

On October 6, the Board reversed its position and reinstated Eric in the classroom, to be effective October 19th. Eric was overjoyed. "I don't remember being as happy before," he told the Shelburne *Coast Guard*. "I can't even think of an adjective to express my surprise. At first, I thought someone was playing a practical joke." He shared with the *Guardian* his strategy for dealing with his pupils' possible reactions to his condition. "The first thing I would do is sit down with the children and have a discussion of the whole subject. I would tell them if I cut myself they should back off 'til everything is cleaned up. After that I would answer their questions." He expressed concern about the anti-gay overtones of the mounting campaign, but reminded the community that homosexuals have civil rights and that he posed no moral or medical risk to his pupils.

Eric's joy was short-lived. On October 9, just three days after the School Board decision, the Concerned Parents of Cape Sable Island (hereafter referred to as "Concerned Parents") held a public meeting at Cape Sable Island Elementary School in Centreville, where Eric was scheduled to teach in two weeks time. Eric himself sat in the back of the packed auditorium.

From the start, the meeting had a fundamentalist flavour — the island's many satellite dishes and televisions spouting the "gospel" of the American South were having an effect on many islanders' thinking. The gathering's main feature was an hour-long American religious video tape called *The AIDS Cover-up*, featuring Reverend Jack Van Impe. The video claimed that AIDS is God's punishment for sexual deviance. A powerful homosexual lobby, it argued, wants to teach homosexuality in public schools so that, as gay ranks are decimated by disease, there will be new grist for the homosexuality mill.

Reverend Robert Trites, of Calvary Baptist Church in Woods Harbour, and president of the Evelyn Richardson Elementary School Home and School Association, capi-

talized on the outrage prompted by the video by offering to organize a county-wide boycott to keep Eric out of the classroom. Earlier that day, he said, he had polled all the Grade Six parents at the Evelyn Richardson Elementary School. Of those he could reach, he said, 98% had replied that they would not place their children in a classroom with a teacher carrying the AIDS virus, and 92% had said they would support the Concerned Parents in their boycott.

As October 19 approached, feelings in the community were running high. The School Board, fearing there would be trouble on the day of Eric's return, held hurried consultations with the RCMP. Officials in Halifax were also consulting with all the parties, trying to reach a compromise that might avert a confrontation. Then, on October 16, Education Minister Tom McInnes announced the creation of a provincial Task Force on AIDS and Education, with Eric as an appointed member. This would, conveniently, keep him away from the classroom. Leonard Pace, editor of the Shelburne *Coast Guard*, saw the Task Force as a way the government could buy time. "The reason the Task Force was created," he remarks, "was because the issue here was so explosive."

Eric admits his relief at the compromise decision. "I was ready to go back to the classroom that first day," he remembers, but as the campaign intensified and grew uglier, he had developed second thoughts. He was particularly concerned that children whose parents had decided to send them to school were being threatened by the children of the boycotters.

Initially, the Task Force strategy worked. The Concerned Parents called off their threatened boycott of classes. In Halifax, the 28-member Task Force, headed by Andrew MacKay, the provincial ombudsman and former president of Dalhousie University, scrambled around for a mandate for the hastily-assembled group.

It soon became clear that the storm over the rights of teachers with the AIDS virus would not quickly die down. Premier John Buchanan intensified the controversy on October 20, by demanding that the names of teachers with the AIDS virus be revealed to the public. "I think," he said, "the parents have a right to know and the teachers themselves would want that." Liberal leader Vince MacLean was in agreement. Alexa McDonough of the NDP was more circumspect. She argued that public disclosure should only occur when the teacher presented a health hazard and that the "fear-mongering" strategy of compulsory exposure would only serve to prevent AIDS victims from seeking medical help. Two days later, the confused Premier reversed his position, saying it should not be mandatory for teachers with the AIDS virus to disclose their condition to parents.

This controversy at the provincial level was nothing compared to the furor on Cape Sable Island. Not a week went by without letters, articles, and pro-Concerned Parents editorials appearing in the *Guardian*.

In late January, the AIDS Task Force announced that it would conduct a series of public meetings to hear concerns and recommendations of Nova Scotians on the AIDS issue. The meetings would be held throughout Nova Scotia during the month of March, and the locations included Shelburne and Yarmouth, but not Clark's Harbour. Mayor Michael Nickerson, although dismissing the Task Force as the "AIDS Travelling Road Show," also said it should visit the town "where all the commotion started."

Two days before the Task Force arrived in Shelburne County, the Lockeport Town Council and the Shelburne Municipal Council both passed resolutions that would keep AIDS carriers out of the classroom. The other three local governments in the county, in Barrington, Shelburne and Clark's Harbour, had already adopted similar motions.

But the Shelburne Council's motion was much more than simply a resolution passed out of concern for the possible spread of AIDS. It brought a much more chilling dimension to the controversy around Eric Smith's case: it demanded that teachers, students and staff who were AIDS carriers and/*or homosexuals* be banned from the classroom. One municipal councillor justified the motion with the argument that AIDS was mainly spread by "sodomists." Here was a disease, he added, that was "going to make the bubonic plague look like a Sunday school picnic."

In early April, the Concerned Parents carried out a door to door canvass in the Cape Sable area in support of a petition to ban Eric from the school classroom, even though he hadn't taught in almost ten months. "We the undersigned concerned citizens of Cape Sable Island and surrounding area are opposed to an AIDS carrier to teach our children," the petition said. "If Mr. Smith or any other AIDS carrier should be placed in the classroom we intend to boycott the school."

Perhaps the crusaders' most significant catch was MLA Harold Huskilson, who has represented Shelburne County for 18 years. Huskilson is not generally regarded as a political heavyweight. The local political scene operates on old-fashioned pork barrel principles, and the Liberals are, if anything, more conservative than the Conservatives. Huskilson does not even live in the riding: he resides in Yarmouth, and only maintains a summer home in Shelburne.

Huskilson tabled the Concerned Parents' 1,700-name petition in the House of Assembly. Eric, who in the past had worked together with Huskilson as a fellow Liberal, was particularly stung by his action. "He's at the point now where he doesn't think gays even have a place in society," Eric remarks, "That's his bottom line, and that's taking it to an extreme."

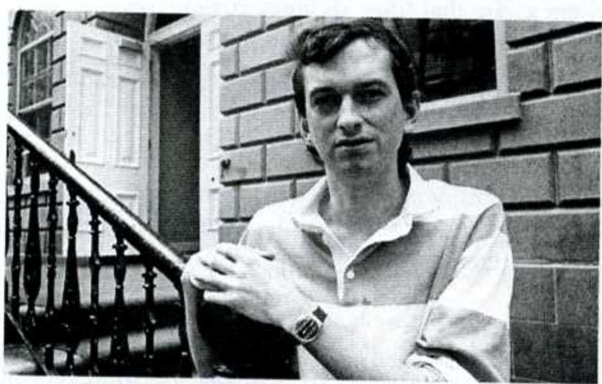
Spearheading the Concerned Parents' campaign were such fundamentalist crusaders as Linda Swim, who followed a strategy of putting maximum pressure on the local School Board. By threatening a boycott and the withdrawal of hundreds of students, they felt they could force the Board to take their side. If Eric were allowed to teach, the Concerned Parents said, "it would result in an extremely large number of students being withdrawn from the two Cape Sable Island schools and their being placed in a private and more screened system." This large withdrawal of students would "have a drastic effect

on the public system in our Municipality, leaving a number of teachers without teaching positions and a lack of funding from lost students."

No stone was left unturned. Swim, for example, launched a bitter attack on the Clark's Harbour Home and School Association for having sent Eric a note and a cheque for $500, in sympathy with his bad news and in recognition of his past contributions.

When Dr. Walter Schlech came down to an AIDS workshop in Yarmouth in October, 1986, he drew a crowd of just eight people, most of them professionals. He took as his theme the absence of an AIDS-phobia in Nova Scotia. A year and a half later, on Tuesday, March 15, 1988, close to 300 people crowded a public session of the Nova Scotia Task Force on AIDS at the Clark's Harbour Elementary School. AIDS-phobia had truly arrived.

The Task Force backtracked on its decision not to visit Clark's Harbour because three different questions were causing an unprecedented uproar on Cape Sable Island in the months leading up to March 15: the educational question of Eric Smith and the classroom, the medical question of AIDS and the ethical question of homosexuality.



Katrina Swendseid

Initially, the Concerned Parents had concentrated on the potential medical danger to the school children. In October, Bonnie Blades of Centreville likened sending her children to Eric's class to pointing a loaded gun at their heads or to setting her two-and-a-half year old on the road and hoping a car wouldn't run him down. Correspondents in the *Guardian* contributed to the sense of panic by alleging that up to 10% of AIDS cases were spread by casual contact.

Fundamentalists deal in certainties, medical science in probabilities and percentages. That no case of casually-transmitted AIDS has been documented in reputable medical literature did nothing to slacken their alarm. Even if there were the "slightest doubt" that the AIDS virus could be transmitted casually, the crusaders felt that Eric should be barred from the classroom. "If doctors know so much about AIDS," asked Tina Hatfield in one letter to the *Guardian*, "why can't they give guarantees? As long as there is a slight chance of doubt, I will not take it with my children." MLA Huskilson agreed that "until we know something definite, I think the person with the AIDS should stay outside the classroom until it is proven there is no threat there."

As well as dismissing the doctors as uncertain or misinformed, the campaigners had developed by mid-March the image of their local community coming under attack — from the media, from an all-powerful political establishment influenced by the Gay Rights movement, and even from Eric himself.

The crusaders' stance toward the media was contradictory. The *Guardian* denounced CBC-TV crews for interviewing children (who were generally sympathetic to Eric) without the consent of their parents, and others in the community were particularly stung by a sympathetic profile of Eric in a national magazine. But, at the same time, they relied on the media to spread their fundamentalist message. They disparaged the Task Force as a "travelling road show," but then complained when it appeared the show was going to pass Clark's Harbour by.

As the correspondence in the local weeklies developed, the question of Eric's future began to take a back seat to the wider, more general issues of AIDS and homosexuality. Many of the correspondents displayed obvious signs of homophobia.

Linda Swim and some fellow crusaders, for example, had by mid-March won considerable political support for a more drastic approach to AIDS: segregated schools. As Lockeport Mayor Malcolm Huskilson explained, at such segregated schools, children with AIDS would be taught only by teachers with AIDS. In his scheme, children, staff, or teachers with AIDS would be removed from the public schools and quarantined in this private system.

(The demands for segregated schools and for the exposure and expulsion of gay teachers, students, and staff raised some interesting practical problems. How, asked one correspondent to the Shelburne *Coast Guard*, were the authorities to define gay? Would heterosexuals with one or two past homosexual experiences be included? And how would these offenders be detected? Would heterosexuals who were not monogamous get off scott free? Would all teachers and other employees be asked to submit to a lie detector test? Eric himself wondered out loud if the crusaders would start going after those who used birth control or who were divorced, considering that some churches considered both serious sins.)

In the crusaders' eyes, the issue was that of a local grassroots community standing up to an establishment influenced at every level by gay rights activists. "The offended parents of Cape Sable Island have their work cut out for them," campaigner Tom Humble wrote in the *Guardian*. "The establishment is going to lean on them, outflank them, out-manoeuvre them, 'educate' them, and try to divide them and leave them with a tiny core of 'unreasonable, intolerant malcontents.' I believe that grassroots Canadians sticking together can win." In the view of editor Kent Blades, the entire "charade" had largely been the work of the "Gay Rights Movement." He thought that the gay rights activists had pressured the three provincial party leaders into accepting confidentiality for patients testing positive for AIDS, noting darkly that "Those who are of a gay leaning cut across the socio-

economic strata of society. Those who speak for the movement are well funded." One letter in the *Guardian* suggested that when Pierre Trudeau was Prime Minister, "numbers of homosexuals were placed in positions of Authority," and complained, "The Human Rights Commission is more apt to provide protection for a homosexual's job than for a child or adult whose health and welfare could be in danger!"

By the time the Task Force reached Clark's Harbour on March 15, crusading fundamentalists had succeeded in stirring up a powerful homophobic reaction that was quite beyond the reach of education or rational argument. Many of the crusaders had no direct interest in whether Eric returned to school or not — they lived in other communities and their children attended different schools. The key fundamentalist demands would have removed gay teachers, staff, and teachers throughout Shelburne County, whether or not they had AIDS. After nine years of getting along with, and even admiring, a teacher whose gayness was an open secret, many people in the Cape Sable area were converted to a view that any homosexual was by definition unsuitable as a

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teacher *and* as a fellow citizen. Homosexuals were condemned unreservedly as criminals. Citing the civilizations of Greece and Rome, which "fell under divine judgement when sexual perversions became rampant in their culture," Mrs. George Atwood asked, "Should we then allow child molesters, thieves, drunkards, etc. to teach?"

When "The Road Show" finally showed up in Clark's Harbour on March 15, Eric Smith, worried that he, rather than AIDS, might well become the object of public attention, decided not to attend.

On March 15, all the themes raised during the seven months of emotional campaigning were brought to a new pitch of intensity for the benefit of the visiting Task Force. It fell to the fundamentalist clergy to unite the themes of AIDS and homophobia most succinctly.

The Shelburne County clergy, though, did not speak with one shrill voice. A small minority of the mainstream church argued on behalf of tolerance; a Roman Catholic priest talked about the "unconditional love of God," and the Shelburne County Ministerial Association, rejecting the view that homosexuals were receiving punishment from God, called for compassionate and professional treatment of people with AIDS. But such voices of moderation were largely drowned in the fundamentalist backlash.

At the Task Force meeting, only limited attention was paid to risks to children. Linda Swim (who asked, "Would you send your children to a leper, when there was no cure?") raised the prospects of teachers infecting students through staple cuts, nosebleeds, and paper cuts. "Fear is not because of what is known, but because of what is not known," she stated. "The most competent medical professionals tell us that we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg. All this talk about safe sex is a very deceiving bunch of foolishness."

Rev. Bill Bump of the Lockeport Independent Baptist Church put the most influential viewpoint succinctly: "AIDS is a disease concerned with immorality." Pastor Edward Burrill of New Testament Church at The Hawk, Cape Sable Island, said that he had a daughter entering sixth grade next year. If Eric Smith were teaching, she would not be going into his class. There were two reasons, he explained. "One, he is a homosexual. And two, he has AIDS. And I think that's sufficient."

The meeting was, at times, bizarre. LeRoy Quinlan of Stoney Island asked the Task Force members if they were aware that "they (homosexuals) have operations for their rectums?" Pressing on, he suggested that such medically-altered gays might well leave AIDS-infested feces on toilet seats, which, if used immediately afterwards by school children, could expose them to AIDS. Dr. Sullivan of the Task Force delicately reminded Quinlan that most persons, when using the toilet, "tend to sit in the middle (of the seat) rather than on the edge," and that this removed the risk of catching the virus from toilet seats.

It was quite a night, the culmination of a careful, determined campaign. Over the objections of civil libertarians and "queasy liberal Christians," the fundamentalists had succeeded in putting their drastic agenda for moral and religious transformation before a large public.

The Task Force listened, responded to the fury with a patient if patronizing tact, and finally disappeared into the night. It is hard to say if the campaigners were there to see and participate in a performance, or whether they had come with the genuine hope of becoming better informed, but their final message to the experts was clear: no gay students or teachers should be allowed in public classrooms. Period.

Portraying Eric as a menace to the community was the crusaders' most difficult chore. Soft-spoken Eric, the direct descendant of Archelaus Smith, did not look or sound like an enemy alien. Throughout the storm he behaved with moderation and dignity, without denying his homosexuality or speaking harshly of his opponents. Even the Concerned Parents initially felt obliged to say that they were pleased to see Eric on the Task Force "as he has some valuable insights." Leonard Pace of the Shelburne *Coast Guard* supported Eric consistently, partly on the basis of his personal qualities. "Facing fear — especially the fear of death, particularly when the welfare of our children is at stake — always requires courage," he wrote in his first editorial on the subject. "Eric Smith has shown great courage in the forthright

manner in which he has dealt with the media. What would you do if you carried the AIDS virus? Would you show as much courage?" Another correspondent noted, "This young man has demonstrated through nine years in the classroom, throughout the intense scrutiny of his lifestyle and in recent media interviews with regards to the AIDS issue a maturity, calm and sensitivity beyond his years."

Eric never tried to dramatize his position. When he was offered a non-teaching job at a teachers' resource centre, instead of his position in the classroom, he remarked, "I have studied and trained to work with kids.... I may decide to take the assignment but I will need a couple of weeks." When asked about his deep commitment to teaching, he was apt to say something about not really being suited to any other line of work.

Despite Eric's quiet manner and his efforts to keep himself away from the eye of the controversial storm, some crusaders set their sights on him. Linda Swim, for example, condemned what "Eric Smith was doing to the community," adding that "This is not a hate campaign. Moral standards are involved here and this (homosexuality) is wrong no matter what anyone says." Many used the controversy to bring fundamentalist views on other matters into the debate. "Today AIDS, homosexuality, abortion and sexual abuse rear their ugly heads time and time again in our society," read one letter in the *Guardian*, and added, "Each of these issues is at work to destroy the very existence of each one of our families."

Eric Smith says he will never return to live in Shelburne County. Some members of the community say they would welcome him back. Others are glad to be rid of the man who challenged their values by standing up for his rights.

Some of the people in the latter of these two groups used tactics during the controversy that make one understand Eric's reluctance to return home. Eric remembers clearly one unsettling incident. Early one overcast evening, Eric was driving his mother from his sister's house on an old dirt road. "Then I noticed a car coming towards us. Once the man driving the car got close enough to see that it was me in the car, he pulled over to our side of the road, trying to drive me towards the ditch. I pulled over as close as I could to the ditch, and came to a stop. The car swerved around, and took off." His mother recognized the man — a distant relative — and he has since boasted of his act in the community. Eric, sensing the depth of feeling against him, felt pressing charges "wasn't worth it."

Today, Eric rarely visits his relatives. Just a few months ago, the RCMP had to be notified whenever Eric planned to visit, in case of a possible outbreak of violence.

On May 2,1988, Eric Smith announced he had accepted an offer of a three-year position with the provincial Department of Education as a consultant on AIDS education. This decision has effectively tabled, although not ended, the Great Gay Debate on Cape Sable Island.

It's hard to assess the damage done to the community as a result of Eric's case. While AIDS has brought the issue of homosexuality into the public eye, it has also driven many gay individuals deeper into isolation. Eric says that one reason he accepted the job with the Task Force was to contain the backlash of homophobia on the island. He feared for other gays in the community if the witch-hunt continued.

There are other teachers besides Eric in Nova Scotia carrying the AIDS virus. One teacher with AIDS has told the Halifax press that he would rather commit suicide than let his condition become a public issue.

Eric's departure has not softened the Concerned Parents' determination to remove homosexuals from the classroom. "If we find another homosexual in the classroom, our children won't go," says Linda Swim. She says she has the support of 90% of parents in her community, and adds, "I don't feel they (homosexuals) should have rights under the Constitution." Although the School Board has thus far resisted pressure to ban all homosexuals from the classroom, Mrs. Swim is determined to continue her fight.

Eric himself thinks that his fellow Islanders are simply too stubborn to back down. "Parents who were originally concerned about the risk to their children," he says, "have over the last few months accepted what the medical people tell them, but they don't want to look like they're willing to give in to outsiders, since they've got the fight going."

The Concerned Parents are also trying a new tactic; that of trying to get Eric fired under Section 74F in the Education Act, which states that a "teacher should have good moral values." Linda Swim has taken particular aim at a talk about AIDS prevention Eric gave in March, 1988, to a group of students at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

On that occasion, Eric told the students that the only true safe sex is sex without penetration, and was quoted as saying, "Some people say that sounds like second-rate sex, but it doesn't have to be. You can make it exciting. The point is that it is a decision you have to make. You have to decide you are going to practice safe sex." Linda Swim told the School Board that she found the report of his talk "revolting." She asked, "Do we want a person who discusses his moral standard in front of students to this degree? We don't want our children hearing about this type of thing — how exciting homosexuality can be."

To Eric, his candid talks on safe sex are both realistic and completely moral, and he believes that as someone who has faced the AIDS issue directly, his words have a special weight. "The message seems to mean more if someone affected is there giving it," he says. Many parents, perhaps even some Concerned Parents on Cape Sable Island, will have gay children. Why can't they see that it could be one of their own children who grows up gay? "It's going to be that kid that suffers the most," Eric says.

Eric wonders about the priorities of the crusaders. From his perspective one of the biggest problems facing the Island is alcohol and drug abuse. Many young people turn to drugs because they do not have enough to do.

He also wonders if parents have the moral right to deny their children realistic education about AIDS. "I sometimes wonder if this is a case in which the govern-

ment should override the rights of parents," he remarks. "If the kids don't get the information on AIDS, the ultimate result could lead to their death." He worries about the way moral issues are treated in the school curriculum. He thinks they are raised too late. "If you do it with them in elementary school, at that age they haven't made hard judgements yet. By the time they're in senior high, some kids have picked up their parents' feelings. I think if you work at it with kids when they're young, they can very easily put themselves in the position of the person who's being treated unfairly. I think quite often that the curriculum is designed to please parents, and that parents don't give kids credit for being as old as they are."

He misses the regular teaching, but he is willing to put a lot of himself into his new job with the Department of Education. "It's still education," he says. He hopes that the Advisory Council on AIDS, operating through the Department of Health, will ensure that there will never be an "Eric Smith case" again. "Depending on whether or not the government is sincere," says Eric, "I think it can be made to work."

For someone virtually driven off an island on which he had lived most of his life, Eric shows surprisingly little bitterness. He remembers Cape Sable Island as a very good place to work.

As the first AIDS carrier in Nova Scotia to become a household name, he realizes that his future is largely in the hands of politicians. He is surprisingly optimistic.

"I think in the long run the AIDS issue will have a positive benefit on how society looks on homosexuality," Eric says, "because of lot more people are going to realize that they do in fact know gay people."

There will inevitably be more cases in Nova Scotia of teachers with AIDS. The very nature of AIDS makes confidentiality unlikely. And Eric is troubled by the thought that the fundamentalist victory on Cape Sable Island may set a precedent for a province-wide witch-hunt.

Should he have fought to the bitter end? Eric thinks not. For him, educating students across Nova Scotia about AIDS is more important than scoring points on Cape Sable Island. "To me," he says, "if you can give young people enough information so that they can go out and protect themselves from a fatal disease, I think there's a lot of morality in that... There's nothing more immoral than letting people die because they haven't been informed about AIDS."•

Erin Goodman is a Halifax researcher, writer, and feminist..

A Proposal for AIDS Education

Excerpts from "The Judeo-Christian View of Male-Female Relationships," presented to the Shelburne County District School Board for consideration for the public school curriculum, by Rev. Robert Trites of Woods Harbour:

PURPOSE: To present a Christian view of the designed relationship that GOD has ordained for man and woman. The plan for that relationship as the Bible teaches it, also the reason for the guidelines, and the consequences when those guidelines are forsaken and overstepped.
OUR AIM: To save lives by educating our young people in the Christian perspective of morality...
PLAN OF PRESENTATION:(1)The Foundation is The Fact Of GOD (2)The Design (The world was design perfect and man was a part of that perfect world) (3)The Responsibility of Man In Our World (In caring for the plant, animal and human aspects of our world) (4)The Consequences That Affect All Of Us (When GOD'S guidelines are broken and we neglect our responsibilities there are consequences to accept.)

CONSEQUENCES
RESPONSIBILITIES
DESIGN
FACT OF GOD

.... Second Class Session
THE LIMITS OF MAN BY GOD
A) BASED ON LOVE...
B) MAN'S SEXUALITY (The limit -- one man for one woman for life) (1 Cor 7: 1-5).
(This limit is breached through
--fornication
--adultery
--homosexuality)...

...RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEN AND WOMEN
A) LEGAL. Obedience to laws of land. (Government). Stop at accidents, register cars, firearms, pay taxes
B)MEDICAL -- Giving Blood, donating organs
Researching diseases to find cures
Observing Quarantine....

Readings

In Search of Maritime Literature

1/ Paul Robinson: Alden Nowlan and the Maritime Literary Renaissance

Alden Nowlan, *The Wanton Troopers* (Fredericton, Goose Lane Editions, 1988, $12.95.)

I heard the news while driving along the Saint John River. Alden Nowlan, poet, novelist, essayist, and journalist, had died. Aged fifty. Gone too soon. A cultural loss as painful as the death of Glenn Gould, also fifty. No more precise and beautiful Bach preludes from Gould's piano, and no more humane and brilliant metaphors from Nowlan's pen.

For more than two decades, Nowlan's presence in the Maritime literary community had inspired readers and writers alike. If he hadn't personally carried forward our literature on his massive shoulders, his influence had nonetheless overshadowed that of most of his contemporaries. For me, it didn't matter then that our paths had rarely crossed. Once there had been a "meeting" on the back page of *Atlantic Advocate* in his regular monthly column. Later we met backstage at the Neptune Theatre in Halifax while he was awaiting an award from the Nova Scotia Writers' Federation. He was then in the company of Newfoundland poet, Al Pittman, and I was hanging around hoping for an introduction. What I remember most was his powerful presence, the sound of his laughter, and his gentleness. Now, in 1983, somewhere on the Trans-Canada close to Fredericton, where Nowlan spent his most productive writing years, I heard the sad news.

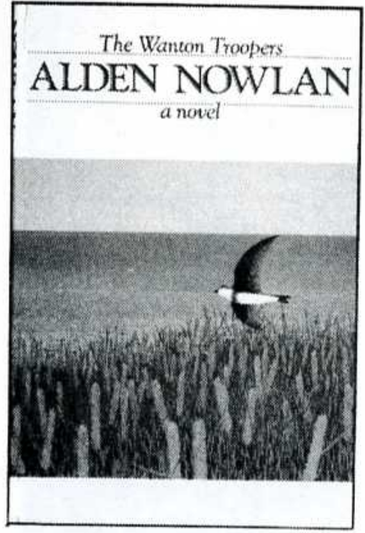
Five years later, in the spring of 1988, I stopped at Woodstock's sole bookstore to browse through the shelves of recently published New Brunswick titles. It was there that I found *The Wanton Troopers*.

Somehow it seemed appropriate that the first novel Nowlan wrote in 1960 should have been encountered in the informality of a small Woodstock bookstore — for Nowlan, born in the tiny village of Stanley, Hants County, Nova Scotia, always had a profoundly intuitive ear for the rhythms of life in the rural communities and small towns where so many of us live. For the remainder of the afternoon, I sat at a picnic table with the roar of the Mactaquac Dam in my ears and went back to those early years — to a lumber town on the fringe of the Annapolis Valley, and to the story of twelve-year-old Kevin O'Brien, the central character and focus of *The Wanton Troopers*.

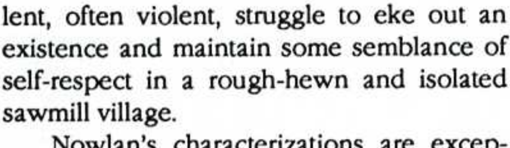
> Nowlan's presence in the Maritime literary community inspired readers and writers alike

The recollection of my brief encounters with Alden Nowlan are important to me now as I retrace the impact of what I have read. For a quarter of a century *The Wanton Troopers* had been filed away with Nowlan's papers at the University of Calgary. Years ago, Nowlan submitted it for publication. It was rejected. It says a great deal about the new stature of regional literature today that Goose Lane Editions of Fredericton, one of the superb new publishers that are changing the face of Maritime and Newfoundland literary expression, has rectified that rejection by retrieving Nowlan's first novel and publishing it in this fine edition. What a publisher had thought marginal in 1960 takes on a new significance in 1988.

The Wanton Troopers is the first of Nowlan's painful and compellingly autobiographical novels, and as such is a major key to the work of one of the region's greatest writers. The Kevin we meet in *The Wanton Troopers* is the same acutely self-conscious Kevin we encounter at a later stage of life in Nowlan's masterful novel *Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien*. Both Kevins take us into the hard lives of the rural poor, lives that Nowlan described compellingly because they so closely resembled his own.



More than one reviewer has said that reading *The Wanton Troopers* has the feeling of looking through a key hole into the private life of the author — an invasion of Nowlan's privacy. Perhaps if my acquaintance with him had not been so fleeting I would be in a better position to validate that assessment. As it is, the story can be read as a depressing account of one family's turbu-



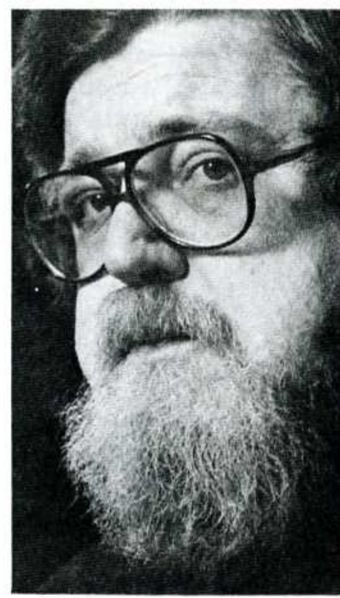
lent, often violent, struggle to eke out an existence and maintain some semblance of self-respect in a rough-hewn and isolated sawmill village.

Nowlan's characterizations are exceptionally strong. Judd, Kevin's father, is a hard-working, hard-drinking mill hand. He succumbs to appalling fits of rage and (less frequently) to well-concealed feelings of tenderness. His life, and that of his family, are in the hands of the mill owners. When Judd has a job and some money, he can buy booze and food and indulge in rare acts of veiled generosity (as when he unexpectedly and unemotionally buys Kevin a watch). For the most part, though, Judd runs on the treadmill of dependency and vents his frustration and anger on his few possessions — the family cow, the pet cat, his wife and his son.

Writers in the region are producing the best realistic fiction in the country

Mary, Kevin's mother, is equally tormented by her circumstances. Married too young, a mother before she was ready, she is trapped in a life without promise. Her one outlet for affection is Kevin, whom she endearingly refers to as "Scampi", a playful reference to his size and delicate features. Her loving care of Kevin, whether preparing him for bed, bathing him or dressing him for church, are possessive to the point of being sensual. But it is not enough — unfortunately for Kevin, the bonds between them aren't strong enough to make her life bearable and the family unit is broken.

Caught in the middle, in a situation he can't fully comprehend, Kevin escapes from reality in books and daydreams of daring and prowess. School, when it is not made terrifying by bullies, is a mind-deadening experience. Like other adolescent children, he fumbles for affection and for understanding of his developing body and emotions. Although religion might have provided some resolution to Kevin's largely unanswerable questions, the faith available to him is the fundamentalist religion of the dispossessed and despairing — a terrain dominated by terrifying images of "fountains filled with blood" and ruled by an implacable God. In fundamentalist culture (represented here by Kevin's grandmother) life is harnessed to a chariot of fear. For Kevin, as for everyone else living in these predatory conditions, the pain is unrelieved, and the pleas go unanswered. Here is a powerful and dark portrait of a way of life.



But *The Wanton Troopers* can be read with another emphasis, one that gives it added and more lasting importance. With very little fanfare, writers in the Maritimes and Newfoundland are producing the best collection of realistic fiction to be found anywhere in the country. In short stories and novels an incredibly rich and intimate picture of life in our region is unfolding. The story settings are as varied as the provinces themselves: the south coast of Newfoundland (*The Corrigan Women* by Jean Dohaney, Ragweed, 1988), industrial Cape Breton (*The Company Store* by Sheldon Currie, Oberon, 1988), a Guysborough County fishing village (*Squatter's Island* by W.D. Barcus, Oberon, 1986), the Miramichi River (*The Coming of Winter* by David Adams Richards, Oberon, 1974), and rural Prince Edward Island (*The North Shore of Home* by Frank Ledwell, Nimbus, 1986). Sometimes the writing style is as exquisitely polished as Alistair MacLeod's *Lost Salt Gift of Blood* (McClelland and Stewart, 1976) and sometimes the touch is as deftly light as Michael Hennesey's *An Arch for The King* (Ragweed, 1984). At times the impact is as strong as in William Gough's *Maud's House* (Breakwater, 1984), or as rollickingly provocative as in Wayne Johnston's *The Story of Bobby O'Malley* (Oberon, 1985).

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In all these works the focus of the writing is the same — the lives of ordinary people in ordinary circumstances, but not necessarily circumstances that are well-known and understood. And therein lies their appeal and significance. In less than a generation, regional writers have painted a far more complete picture of East Coast lives than was available to us in the past. Rural lives, one-industry towns, the coast and the sea have been explored with a particular care. In its special and unsettling way, *The Wanton Troopers* adds another dimension to our understanding of who we are and where our roots lie. In this sense, *The Wanton Troopers* adds greatly to the literary heritage we all share. •

Paul Robinson is a free-lance writer, consultant and Atlantic Co-ordinator of the National Book Festival for the Canada Council.

Maritime Literature 2/
Ellison Robertson : In Exile From Adulthood

Lesley Choyce, An Avalanche of Ocean: The Life and Times of a Nova Scotia Immigrant. Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, $12.95.

Peter Gzowski proclaims on the back of the book that Lesley Choyce is "Nova Scotia's answer to the Renaissance Man," but here is no Leonardo's notebook. Only one of the essays in this collection was written for radio, but most of them have the chatty irrelevance of a radio show you might listen to while you went about your day. You might even smile at the occasional image emerging from the media drone, but you would turn the damn radio off if you heard the same thing being repeated.

I admit that, having grown up in Cape Breton at a time when wearing shorts more than a few hundred yards from the water could get you beaten up as an eccentric, I was not happy by page ten to realize that I was reading the work of a man who actually admits to going surfing in winter. I have *tried* to overcome the brutal prejudices of my childhood peers. If only there wasn't so much more in this book to irritate me!

Choyce is a much better, and more committed, writer than these throw-away pieces demonstrate. We find no real sample of his potential until the middle of this collection when we reach "Blind Allegiance," a collage of reminiscences. This, as with a few other good pieces, is about the author's life before he became the self-styled immigrant whose scattered perceptions and musings form the first part of the book.

As an immigrant Choyce presents a disarming sense of uncertainty about who *he* is, while offering glimpses of a narrow certainty about who *we* are. He tells us in the beginning he's escaped from the insane excesses of big-city America by moving to the sane rural paradise of Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore. He has drawn on that area and its people in his fictional writing. There might be some point in reflecting on the mundane trivia of an author's daily existence during such a period of creation, but even this is more ambitious than what we find here. We are being offered the leftovers of a working writer's engagement with his craft. This book possibly makes a certain amount of sense as a publisher's clever packaging of an odds-and-sods collection, but it does disservice to Choyce's own considerable efforts as a publisher and editor in this region.

The message of this collection is ambiguous and sometimes offensive. Choyce has chosen exile from his adult experiential life and has been rewarded with a homecoming to his (if not our) mythical childhood. But this often repeated theme suggests he's really just found a place where he has access to a simpler vision of urban excess — ATV drivers, duck hunters, developers — and we are left to wonder if these aren't also neighbours, the locals, the culturally bereft heirs of a "progress" that rolled over their ancestors long before the invention of Choyce's dread bulldozer.

> The message of this collection is sometimes offensive

The word "adolescent" kept popping into my skull while reading this book, until I came to the piece called "The Perpetual Adolescent" and thought I'd been checkmated. Then I realized Choyce uses this term in a positive sense. He is referring to a capacity for enquiry, for naive amazement, to a lack of numbing sophistication, characteristics that can fairly be ascribed to Choyce himself. Unfortunately, he also suffers from some of the teen-aged writer's other characteristics — such as a tone of adolescent bombast and unconscious arrogance. (Sometimes I was reminded of the way high school students write when they are imitating what they think is the easy rambling style of a Leacock or Thurber — before they realize how hard it is to make this style work without the leaven of experience and acquired skill.).

The reminiscence "Ciad Mille Failte" exemplifies these and other diffrculties, another glaring example of perception becoming presumption. In this piece, Choyce describes a summer spent in Cape Breton during his first exploratory visit to

Nova Scotia. He meets "Fulty McPherson" who befriends him, sees he and his wife have a place to stay, and entertains them with "a series of adventures," including the poaching of lobster.

Five years later, during another visit, Fulty invites Choyce to go into a gold mining venture, but Choyce declines because "the world of responsibilities, careers and schedules had caught up with me and relegated the island of Cape Breton to my past." Years later he visits Fulty in a Halifax hospital and imagines going to see him again at home in Inverness, but Choyce goes back to the "usual things of day-to-day life" and hears no more about his friend until he's dead and buried.

Trying to praise Cape Bretoners to the skies, Choyce falls into the trap of adopting the same terms as those who denigrate them. They are enduring, persevering, with a servant's (or perhaps a child's?) sneering attitude to authority and innocent of any desire for progress. After a genuinely affecting experience, Choyce has rushed too quickly to use it as raw material for one of the "flashes of insight" that supposedly let him "see or hear more than usual".

Cape Bretoners are enduring, persevering, innocent of any desire for progress

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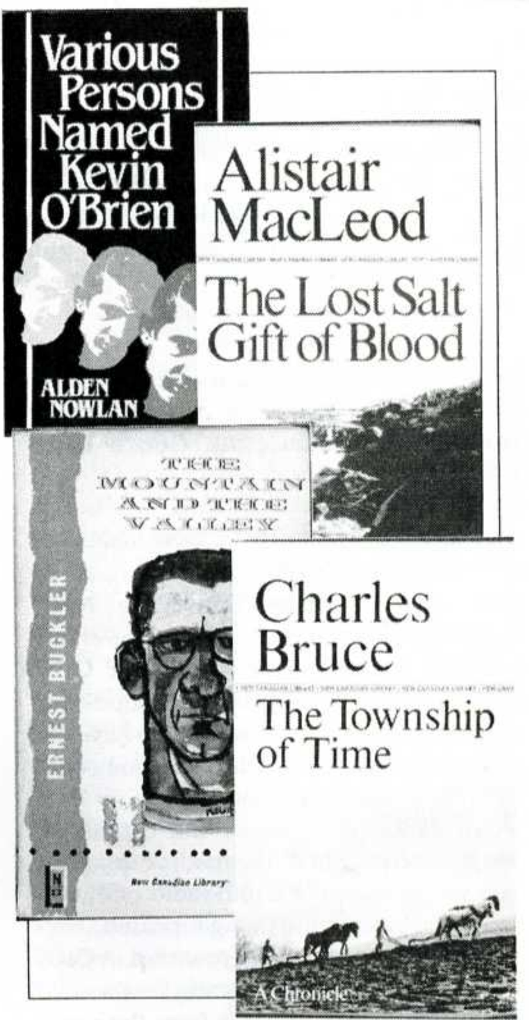
I do not want to be unfair to Choyce. It is Choyce's own skillful writing that makes such lapses stick out all the more. His powers of description are often good enough to tempt you to forget in mid-piece that this is all in aid of another of his self-made "epiphanies".

Reading this book is a little like Choyce's own account of listening to the radio late at night: "Suddenly, you find something, a station that comes through clean and clear with really good music that cuts right through all the other crap. You hear the radio jock tell you he's in Fort Wayne, Indiana, or St.John's, Newfoundland, or some impossible Prairie town. There's something magical about it but pretty soon it's gone. You've lost the station and there's nothing left but static."

Lesley Choyce can be a pretty good writer. If you aren't familiar with his work, this ill-conceived collection is not the place to start. •

Ellison Robertson is a Cape Breton writer and artist. Cranberry Head: Stories and Paintings by Ellison Robertson *was published in 1985 by the University College of Cape Breton Press.*



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Maritime Literature 3/ Erik Kristiansen, Considerations on Maritime Literature: Janice Kulyk Keefer and the Search for an Ideal Community

Janice Kulyk Keefer, *Under Eastern Eyes: A Critical Reading of Maritime Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, $14.95).

As in so many other cultural spheres, Maritime literature has been marginalized by Central Canadian writers unconscious of their own regional bias.

Pick up most thematic guides to Canadian literature, read the book reviews in the *Globe and Mail*, listen to discussions of fiction on the CBC, and you will find that Maritime voices, Maritime writers, the Maritime Provinces themselves have virtually disappeared.

Canadian historians and literary intellectuals have defined Canadian literature in a way that systematically edits out the Maritime region. They believe, Janice Kulyk Keefer argues, that "...Canada's invisible or forgotten east has ... contributed nothing" to the development of Canadian literature. They dismiss the parochial "regionalism" of the East, praise the universal outlook of such novelists as Hugh MacLennan or Robertson Davies, and remain blithely unaware that, from vantage points outside the Saint Lawrence River valley, these writers themselves merely reflect the dominant regionalism of Ontario and Quebec.

As a distinctive and vital literary region, the Maritimes has been virtually neglected by critics and scholars of Canadian literature. Maritime writers have been devalued in the country as a whole, as central Canadian intellectuals have overlooked the diversity and richness of a literary "sidestream" that may, Keefer suggests, possess "an authenticity, even a subversive quality that could make the Maritimes the thought provoking, if not the thought-control, centre of Canada." Keefer may alert many Canadians to the regional renaissance that since the Second World War has redefined the regional novel and regional

She combines close textual analysis with historical research — a very refreshing approach, considering that texts these days are all too frequently treated as abstractions having little or no relation to history. Her kind of historical criticism faces two difficult challenges. First, it has to show why a particular text was produced at a particular moment. Second, it has to show that this historical pattern was reproduced within the text under discussion.

It is more because she raises, rather than resolves, these challenges that Keefer should be read by everyone interested in our cultural traditions. In some instances, Keefer's reading of the Maritime literary tradition is shallow, her historical analysis inadequate, and her scatter-gun approach to the central themes of class and capitalism disappointing. Historically-oriented criticism has to meet the challenge of explaining why a particular text emerged at a particular time, and Keefer does not do this. Her understanding of Martime history is uneven. She has made a good beginning in regional literary criticism, but these unresolved problems mean that her study, useful and interesting in many respects, is rather disappointing and fragmented in others. Keefer, like anyone exploring new ground, has made both discoveries and, in my opinion, serious mistakes.

> Keefer, like anyone exploring new ground, has made both discoveries and serious mistakes

In this first of a two-part review of this landmark book -- whose cultural significance will be profound -- I would like to talk about how she handles the key concept of "community" and in particular her interpretation of two Maritime writers, Andrew Macphail and Charles Bruce, who present their readers with brilliant portraits of rural Maritime communities.

Keefer believes that the idea of "community" lies at the heart of the best Maritime literature. She is undoubtedly right, but the way she uses this idea is shallow and dated. She is using an old conceptual framework of "ideal types" of community that prevents her from adopting a more dynamic form of analysis.

Keefer prefaces her treatment of community by making a distinction between "community" and "society." What she is using here is an "ideal type" of analysis that uses a kind of abstract model of the traditional "community" as a benchmark for research. The unfortunate thing about her method is that it freezes an idealized traditional community in time, when in fact, growth and decay in communities throughout history.

This approach is too simplistic to be of

Under Eastern Eyes

Keefer doesn't seem to know that classes are transformed within the community itself

use in understanding the complexity of community change, whether in the world of lived experience or in the works of our regional novelists.

What does Keefer mean by "community"? She says:

> *A community can be seen as an extended family in which all is held by, or appertains to, all, and whose members, though richer or poorer, share a common economic base, be it farming, fishing, or mining. Moreover, a community is a cohesive and inclusive body ruled more by recognition of what its members have in common than by awareness of what distinguishes and separates individuals, or groups of individuals, from one another.*

This is not a clear analysis. It is not clear whether Keefer is contrasting a class-based "society" with a pre-class "community" or with a community which consists of only a single class. Yet a *society* with social classes with different interests, and a single-class *community* with a commonalty of interests, are two very distinct types of social organization. Keefer's analysis leads to confusion because her criteria are so impressionistic and subjective that "community" becomes a quality whose presence or absence lies almost entirely in the eye of the beholder.

Keefer establishes two "ideal types," a small commodity-producing "community" of farmers and fishermen, and the modern capitalist/industrial "society." In her "ideal type" of a small commodity-producing community, the centre of production is the extended household, and both parents and children are actively involved in this domestic economy of production. Most things are made becaue they are of use to the producers themselves. Although some things may be exchanged by barter or in rudimentary marketplaces, villages are on the whole self-sufficient, families are associated with particular pieces of land, and there is very little economic rationalization. This type of economic organization results in very limited social and geographical mobility.Such "communities" tend to be socially stable with little social or geographical mobility, and dominated by males who view marriage and children as an investment in the future. Morality is community centred, rooted in traditional religious beliefs.

Modernity reverses these characteristics. The traditional small commodity-producing community is composed of a single social class, while contemporary capitalist industrial "societies" are divided into a number of different classes based on the individuals' relationship to the ownership of the dominant means of production. Modernity in its Western, capitalist form normally means a highly geographically mobile labour force and isolated nuclear families rather than extended households. Capitalist modernity has also resulted in a highly rationalized economy based on production for exchange in an impersonal marketplace. The breakdown of the household as the centre of economic production is the precondition of a morality that is centred on the individual, not a collective "community."

By adopting this kind of ideal type of "community" as her benchmark, Keefer suggests a huge gap between traditional, decaying Maritime communities and the modern world. And so she deals with both Maritime history and its treatment in fiction simply as the story of "decaying" traditional "communities." What this kind of analysis overlooks the more complicated story of how pre-capitalist communities were transformed into class-divided societies. Her approach, in other words, gives us a freeze-dried "traditional community" as an abstract model, while the historical reality (and the way this reality is treated in fiction) is far richer and more interesting.

Class — that is, Keefer's inability to recognize class — lies at the bottom of this conceptual confusion. Keefer seems to have difficulty in recognizing the existence of distinct classes. What she tends to do is look at capitalism, not as a distinctive kind of society based on a system of production in which many people sell their labour power to a few, but as the marketplace. This perspective is weak. It misinterprets Maritime history, and distorts Maritime literature. Without adequate definitions of capitalism or class, her interpretations of how "community" is handled in key Maritime novels can only be unconvincing.

Keefer knows that social classes exist in "society" as opposed to community.But she doesn't seem to know is that class trans formations go on inside the "community" itself. And this is a pity, because so many Maritime novels deal subtly and sensitively with this theme, and missing that fact robs them of a lot of their vitality and interest.

A good example of the high cost of this oversimplified view of the traditional community can be found in Keefer's discussion of Andrew Macphail's classic novel *The Master's Wife* (which, though completed

in 1929, remained unpublished until 1939, the year after the author's death). Keefer's analysis of *The Master's Wife* is at one and the same time illuminating and inadequate.

The Master's Wife is centred on a "traditional Maritime community" (Orwell, Prince Edward Island) in the years before the First World War. This was a time of profound historical transformation throughout the Maritimes, although life in many small rural communities was still rooted in small commodity production. Certainly this is the reality in the fictional Orwell: in these "remembrances of things past," Macphail informs us that "a man who lives on his own land and owes no man anything develops all the dignity inherent in his nature." This ideal of the independent small commodity producer pervades both Macphail's narrative account of his childhood, and Keefer's analysis of it.

Keefer is keenly aware of the historical transformation sweeping early twentieth century Prince Edward Island. She contrasts the "roughly equal" lifestyle of the Orwellians with the nearby "completely civilized" town of Malpeque. She stresses that Macphail first develops a "clear consciousness of the facts of class distinctions and antagonisms..." Macphail tells us that Malpeque is a "society" with class mobility "in which the lower members could only by sheer merit and incredible difficulty rise to the top".

Keefer quotes these lines, but she is significantly silent on two crucial aspects of Macphail's observations. She first misses what Macphail has to say about social classes. Along with the "lower members" of Malpeque, the wage-laborers, there "were descendants of governors, judges, ministers, and statesmen; landowners, physicians, merchants, all with a pride in their own class, and all living in harmony". Macphail's talk about this "class harmony" makes sense in its historical context: that of a time of intense class struggle, both in the Maritimes and in Canada as a whole. If we look at *The Master's Wife* as a "diological" text — a text actively dealing with the issue of class struggle that was so prevalent in the"dialogues" surrounding class transformations at this time — and if we remember that Macphail was a prolific writer on such themes as feminism, theology, education, conflict between the classes, and "the disintegration of family life," — we can see the novel as a serious attempt to work out, in fiction, some of the serious social conflicts of the twentieth century. Keefer misses this general social message entirely, a serious omission on the part of an intellectual who advocates a "transparent" and historically based analysis.

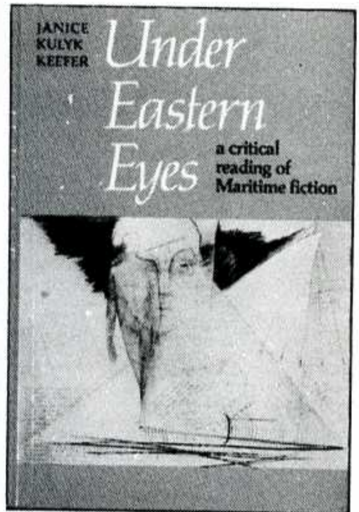
The second silence in Keefer's study is an analysis of the classes in Orwell itself. As a medical professor at an elite medical school, Macphail had become a member of what is frequently termed the new middle class. Even a superficial reading of *The Master's Wife* should reveal that Orwell was not, as Keefer suggests, a "community" (as opposed to a "society") in which "all were roughly equal despite incidental differences in material possessions..." What we seem to find in Orwell is a "community," even in Macphail's youth, which is composed of a small number of men like Macphail's father, who is a school inspector and a hospital supervisor. The rest of the "community" are not at all independent commodity producers. Each year "surplus young men and women migrated to Boston... There they found friends, work and money..." There was also a supply of wage labour. The selling of labour power in Orwell is mentioned several times in Macphail's text.

So, in fact, Orwell is scarcely the ideal-type of traditional "community" that both Macphail and Keefer suggest it is. It is, instead, a "community" in transition. As well as the rare professional, such as a school inspector and perhaps a local doctor, we have the traditional small commodity producers (small farmers and craftsmen) and a supply of part-time wage labourers and even the occasional full-time wage labourer. By avoiding any discussion of the actual social history of the early twentieth century, Keefer has perpetuated, as myth, the utopia that Macphail, as a conservative and sophisticated intellectual, held up as an ideal .

Keefer has similar but even more serious problems with her reading of Charles Bruce's *The Channel Shore* , undoubtedly one of the most brilliant novels of Maritime literature Here, Keefer's problems with understanding capitalist development lead to a shallowness of interpretation, because capitalist development stands at the novel's very centre.

Once again, Keefer's reading of *The Channel Shore* centres on the concept of community. She informs us that "*The Channel Shore* deals with the interwoven loves and hates of a small cast of characters within a tightly bound community." Several pages

Keefer perpetuates as myth, the utopia that Macphail held up as an ideal



/Readings

later she tells us that the "innovativeness of Bruce's project in *The Channel Shore* — his impassioned attempt to transform, redeem and, for coming generations, validate the concept of community — can be seen in his definition and showing forth of community as a kind of narrative, of human lives as endlessly interwoven, living fictions." In the closing paragraph of her chapter on "community" we learn from Keefer that "Bruce ultimately presents a particular Maritime community as a microcosm of possible human relationships, and a given place, the Channel Shore, as human life itself".

Bruce was scathingly critical of capitalist development

The Shore is obviously a social microcosm, but in a far more sophisticated sense than Keefer's methods of analysis are capable of revealing. Through her central silence on the question of class relations, she misses one of the major points of Bruce's fiction — one of the major ways in which it is "subversive" of the certainties of the Canadian mainstream. In fact, there is something else located at the "centre" of this text, indeed, at the very center of the changing "community" reproduced in this fictional world — the commodity.

Stewart Gordon, whose son Anse is a major character in the narrative, is a reader. Keefer points out that Stewart is able "to peruse Nicholas Nickleby while his farm quietly falls apart...." What Keefer doesn't point out is that Stewart was also a reader of the first volume of Marx's *Capital.* Keefer's silence on this point becomes even more strategic when we find out that Marx is not only mentioned, but that Bruce includes a quotation from one of the most important sections of *Capital,* Marx's major text. "This Marx," Stewart remarks to his daughter Anna. "Trouble is, you have to learn a whole new language. Listen to this:

> *The two phases, each inverse to the other, that make up the metamorphosis of a commodity constitute a circular movement, a circuit: commodity-form, stripping off of this commodity-form, and return to the commodity-form.*

"Now," Stewart concludes, "I've got to go back and figure out commodity-form again". Bruce does not tell his readers where this quotation from Marx came from but it seems unlikely he would have introduced this reference merely to add spice to an early chapter of his book. It seems, instead, to provide a conceptual key to his novel as a whole.

Using the concept of commodity to remap an entry point to *The Channel Shore* becomes quite reasonable when we look at the political economy of the "community" described in the novel. In the novel's epilogue, we are given a literary description of economic and cultural change. Keefer's analysis of this sweeping historical transformation is far less interesting than Bruce's treatment of it in *The Channel Shore.*

We remember that Keefer's whole approach to regional social history and literature hinges on her two "ideal types" — small commodity-producing "communities" of farmers and fishermen and modern capitalist/industrial "societies." This literary version of modernization theory removes much of the interest and complexity from a novel like *The Channel Shore.*

The central character of *The Channel Shore* is Grant Marshall, a man of both ambition and talent who refuses to leave his home and emigrate to Toronto or "the Boston States," but stubbornly remains on the Shore. Starting out as a small commodity producer, he gradually changes into a small-time capitalist. By developing capitalist lumbering and eventually by establishing a mill, Grant Marshall contributes to a far-reaching change in the class organization of the Shore. Around Grant and his foster son Alan emerges a capitalist class with their wage labourers forming a part-time working class.

The Channel Shore deals clearly with the decline of pre-capitalist extended kinship bonds and their replacement by a new capitalist "spirit" that only appears to express the collective interest of a transforming "community." What Bruce describes, in other words, is a "community" composed of a single class on its way to becoming a "society" structured around the existence of a number of classes.

Bruce was scathingly critical of this development, as a close reading of the novel's epilogue makes very clear. Here we learn that wage labour involves the loss of personal freedom. And, as one character explains, it was to rediscover independence that the Shore was settled in the first place:

> *"Some got pitched off the land when the lairds began to see more money in sheep than people. I'll bet you most of them ended up here because they couldn't stand being pushed around. Highlanders, lowlanders, Irishmen, Catholics, Protestants, Loyalists, all kinds... Only one living thing they all had. They will not take*

a pushing 'round. ... Nobody else is telling them..."

It is here that the novel's dominant (but changing) ideology — the ideology of the small independent commodity producer, with a communally-based, non-capitalist economic individualism as its goal — becomes quite evident. The next lines are even more revealing:

> *What they did, getting out, was pull off a kind of rebellion. The only kind they could. Personal independence... For a while it opened out on this Shore.... Then steam came, and other things, and it wouldn't work any more. A lot went to the States, and west, and some did all right. Then at last there was nowhere to go but cities. When you go to a city, Bill, unless you're good, in a profession or the arts, you put yourself under a boss. You're back where you were a hundred and fifty years ago. ...*
> *That's why I'm back, if you want to know... What could a man do, that had venture in it, and independence? I looked at what I'd got by leaving. Running water and central heat, and something — oh, cultivation... Well, they seemed to me to be cancelled out by the pulling and hauling, the pressure to say 'Yes' when you wanted to say 'No'... There was venture in coming back...*

This passage draws out the subversive subtext of *The Channel Shore*. It shows that, in part, the novel is one of resistance — resistance to wage labour and to the capitalist mode of production as experienced on the Shore itself. It is in this context of the emergence of capitalist relations of production and the beginning of a capitalist commodity culture that Bruce strategically situates his quotation from Marx's *Capital*. Bruce, however, presents the budding capitalist, Grant Marshall, in such a positive manner, that the critique of capitalism which emerges in the Epilogue is seriously weakened. Indeed, a careful reading of the novel leaves us wondering if Bruce is suggesting that the emergence of capitalism in rural communities is inevitable. Yet Bruce may well have had mixed feelings about the transformation of the traditional mode of living on the Channel Shore.

There is, in short, an extremely sophisticated account of the capitalist undermining of a traditional community in Bruce's novel. With a masterful historical insight, he provides us with a glimpse of the complex interconnections between the major centres of capitalist development and their inevitable influence on the periphery.

Keefer's analyses of Macphail and Bruce are good examples of the strength and limitation of her book. Her strength is that she maps out what for many Maritimers may be a new terrain — the fascinating and intricate world of our regional literature. Her limitation is that she has looked only at the surface, and not at the forces lying beneath it: the forces of capitalist development that so many Maritime novelists have, in their differing and fascinating ways, put at the heart of regional fiction. •

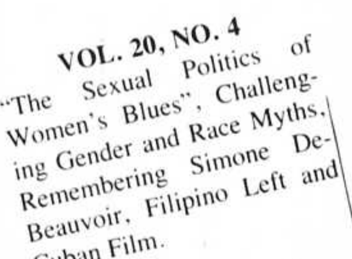
Erik Kristiansen teaches English and History in Halifax. He is writing a general study of Maritime Literature.

The Grey Scar of a Corner-blaze...

"A few side roads like the school house road remained, leading back through places stubbornly kept in cultivation. But most of the back fields had returned to woods. Two and three generations later you could still find them: a stone pile among the spruce, a rock-walled hollow, an apple tree still putting forth a small hard fruit among spruce and fir and second-growth birch. Areas of almost unbroken woods, unmarked except for the grey scar of a corner-blaze on an ancient beech; still known by the names of men who had planted life and left a crop of winter firewood. Lowries...Kilfyles...McNaughtons..."

--From Charles Bruce's *The Channel Shore*

So many Maritime novelists have put capitalism at the heart of regional fiction



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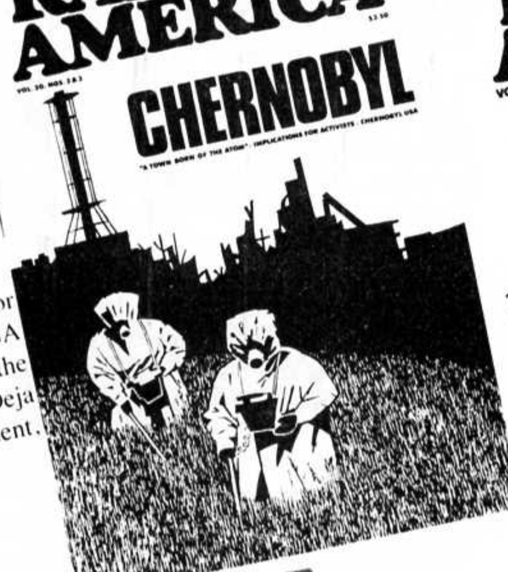

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Backtalk

Charles Restino Annotates
a Scott Advertisement
(*Daily News*,
Halifax, 15 July 1988).

These so-called "weeds" play a vital role in conserving soil nutrients and wildlife habitat. Eliminated are hardwood tree species such as maple, ash, birch, oak, important to maintaining diversity in the forest and potentially more valuable than the planted pulpwood softwood species.

The Roundup label warns: "If fine spray particles are allowed to drift onto crops or desirable plants, they may be injured or killed."

What you *won't* be told is that studies of pesticide drift have shown twenty percent of the herbicide may still be airborne one kilometre from the spray site *even when the wind speeds are zero.* In New Brunswick, crops have been destroyed and livestock killed more than ten kilometres from the spray area.

SCOTT HERBICIDE NOTIFICATION

As part of Scott's silviculture program, the herbicide "Vision" will be applied on selected forestry sites in the vicinity of:

- Hardwood Lake in Kings County; and, Grand Lake and Urbania in Hants County.
- MacLellan Mountain and Dalhousie Mountain in Pictou County; and Melrose in Guysborough County.
- New Salem, Leicester, New Britain and Moose River in Cumberland County; and, Higgin's Mountain, Belmont Mountain, Biorachan, Mountain Road and East Mines in Colchester County.

Herbicide application

The program is scheduled to begin in late July 1988. The herbicide will be applied by helicopter.

"Vision"

"Vision" is registered for use in forestry by the Federal Department of Agriculture. The same product is used in agriculture where it is known as "Roundup".

Safety

"Vision" has been approved by the federal Departments of Health and Environment. Canadian Government scientists have concluded that "Vision" presents no danger to health or the environment when used according to directions.

How much herbicide is used?

Less than two litres of herbicide are applied to each acre. The chemical is diluted with up to 20 litres of water. Herbicide is usually only applied once, or at most twice, in the lifetime of a tree, which is about forty years.

Why is herbicide used?

"Vision" is used to eliminate weeds on sites where softwood seedlings will be planted. This is necessary to permit sun and moisture to reach the newly planted seedlings.

Information for residents

Residents who live within one kilometre of forestry sites where herbicides will be used will be notified by Scott before treatment begins. Access roads to the sites are posted 30 days before application. The signs will not be removed for at least 30 days following treatment.

Government approval

All herbicides used in forestry are fully approved by Nova Scotia Departments of the Environment, Health, and Lands and Forests.

For technical or scientific information on any chemical used in forestry or agriculture, please call the Federal Department of Agriculture's toll free line 1-800-267-6315.

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Public Affairs Department
P.O. Box 549D
New Glasgow, N.S., B2H 5E8
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Approval by government agencies is no guarantee of safety. In 1987, more than two dozen people in Nova Scotia suffered ill effects from pesticides that had been used according to directions.

Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests records show more than 150 violations of federal pesticide regulations since 1985 at provincial tree nurseries. The Nova Scotia Department of Environment has never procsecuted a case involving the illegal use of pesticides.

Charles Restino is a well-known Cape Breton environmentalist.

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