

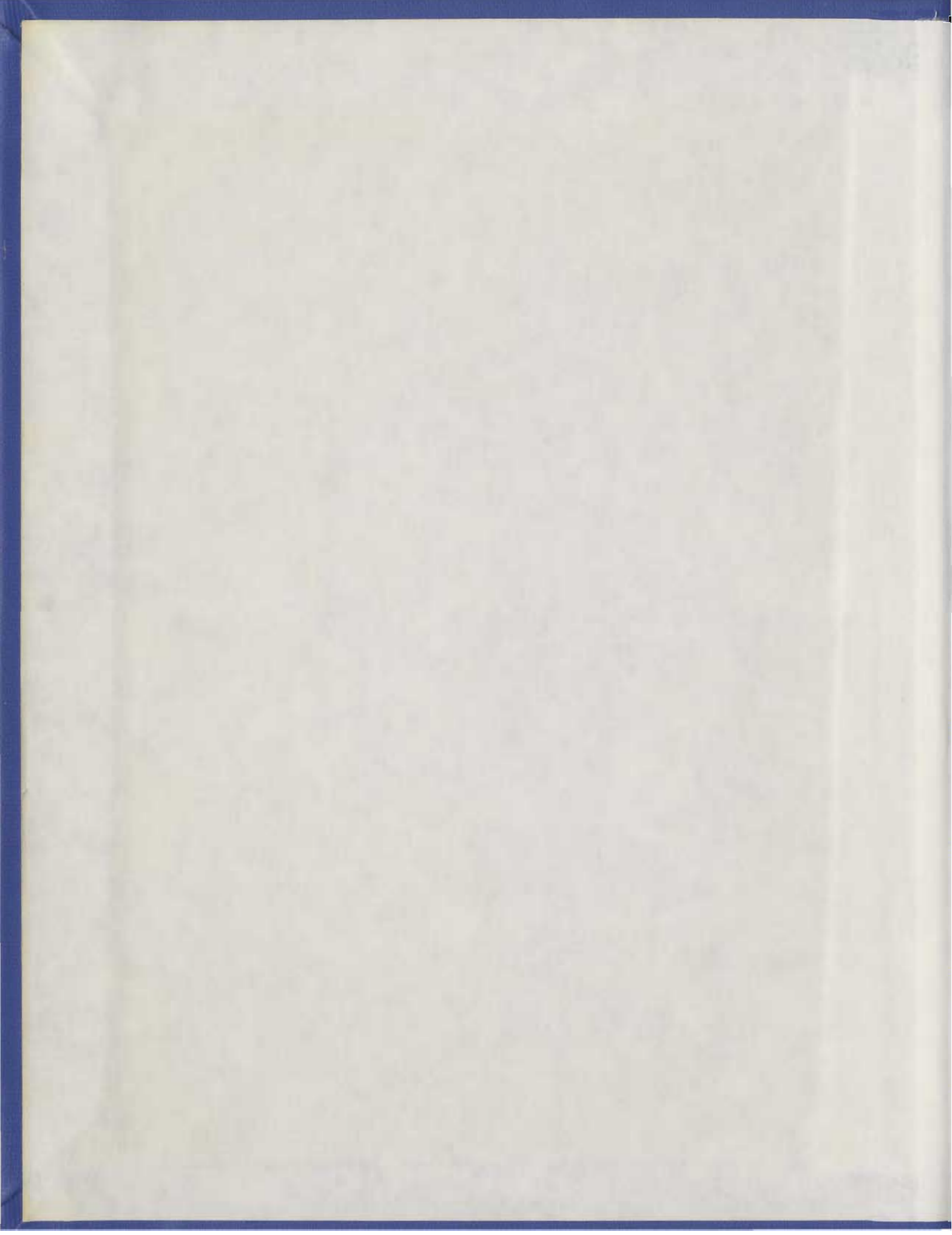
"BLOODY DECKS AND A  
BUMPER CROP:" THE RHETORIC  
OF COUNTER-PROTEST

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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CYNTHIA LAMSON



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"BLOODY DECKS AND A BUMPER CROP:"  
THE RHETORIC OF COUNTER-PROTEST.

by

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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Department of Folklore  
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## ABSTRACT

In Newfoundland, sealing has been a traditional activity for centuries. Despite the fact that the number of ships and men who go to the ice has declined steadily since the late eighteenth century, the whitecoat hunt continues, providing additional income and adventure for men after a long and dreary winter. In the last decade, the hunt has become the focus of attention which has evolved into an international controversy and business in its own right. Initially, conservationists and humane societies were concerned about killing methods and species' population, but federal government regulation and supervision corrected blatant abuses. The second wave of protest brought sophisticated urbanite ecologists to the scene, and with emotional appeals through the media, they created an outraged public who demanded a moratorium on the hunt.

Newfoundlanders first regarded the protest as amusing, but as the threat became more apparent, frequent expressions of counter-protest circulated through newspapers, radio and television programs, and in other public spheres. This thesis argues that counter-protest is a distinctive theme which has culturally-specific rhetorical arguments. Using examples from letters-to-the-editor columns, calls to open-line radio programs, and other sources, I have constructed a typology of expressive strategies which are employed regardless of the form of counter-protest, or the back-

ground of the individual expressing such sentiments.

Emphasis on counter-protest poetry and songs is an effort to demonstrate the continuity of traditional expressive behavior in Newfoundland. Verse-making has long been a popular and respected activity, and sealing has been the theme of innumerable compositions. The esoteric nature of the occupation further contributes to its ability to excite the imagination, and there is continuing public admiration for swilers and their ships.

Newfoundlanders interpret the protest as an assault on their character and integrity, and their expressions reveal a defiant determination to protect their heritage and independence. In contrast, the environmentalists argue from a different perspective, one that encompasses a global ecosystem, and for this reason, it is unlikely the two sides will ever agree about the whitecoat hunt.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dean Frederick A. Aldrich who made my studies at Memorial University possible through generous fellowship support. To my advisor, Dr. Kenneth S. Goldstein, I would like to express my gratitude for his continuing guidance; his kindness and faith in my work were sources of strength I will always cherish. Fellow students in the Folklore Department deserve much credit for their sustained enthusiasm and assistance, and I appreciate their almost daily words of encouragement.

I am indebted to the poets of Newfoundland and, in particular, I wish to thank those verse-makers who willingly consented to assist me with this work for without them there would be no such thesis.

A number of other special people deserve recognition for their continued support, notably Chris Carton and Marilyn Wilcott, who were the best of friends throughout. Bob Pottle was a model of discipline and source of welcome advice. Paul Hamilton, Sam Lee, Tom Cummings, and John Doucet were fine medicine men who saw me through the days of darkness. Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to Marilyn Gould, for Newfoundland would be a far different place for me had I not been so fortunate to share two good years with her. Thank you.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

At this date, a collection of poetry and songs may appear to be a backward step for contemporary folkloristics with its emphasis on performance and contextual studies. This view assumes that folklore is significant behavior in small groups of inter-acting individuals. While scholars have ably demonstrated their ability to identify, describe, and analyze such behavior, another task remains.

If we accept the notion that folklore exists as a problem-solving mechanism,<sup>1</sup> a social tool and technique which protects and perpetuates a group, a society, a culture, then the small-group approach may not be the only appropriate one. As Dan Ben-Amos noted, "folklore is very much an organic phenomenon in the sense that it is an integral part of culture,"<sup>2</sup> and, "in its cultural context, folklore is not an aggregate of things, but a process--a communicative process, to be exact."<sup>3</sup>

This thesis is an effort to demonstrate how folklore operates organically, as a process at the cultural level, and to accomplish this, the definition of context has been expanded to include events and expressions of an

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<sup>1</sup>Roger Abrahams, "Personal Power and Social Restraint in the Definition of Folklore," Towards New Perspectives in Folklore, ed. Americo Paredes and Richard Bauman (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Dan Ben-Amos, "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context," in Towards New Perspectives in Folklore, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

entire decade. It is a cross-generic approach to the study of one particular theme, which I have labelled "counter-protest." To the extent I have tried to delineate the forms of counter-protest, the thesis is descriptive, but my principal concern is with identification and analysis of expressive strategies utilized by Newfoundlanders in response to conflict over the sealing industry.

Rather than trying to discriminate between prevailing definitions of folklore, I hope to illustrate how folklore can simultaneously be, "a body of knowledge, a mode of thought, or a kind of art."<sup>4</sup> On another level, analysis of counter-protest expressions provides information about cultural values and attitudes. Certain expressive behaviors are embodiments of "folk ideas," defined by Alan Dundes as "traditional notions that a group of people have about the nature of man, the world, and man's life in the world. Folk ideas would not constitute a genre of folklore but rather would be expressed in a great variety of different genres."<sup>5</sup>

"Folk ideas" are not readily articulated and generally require some impetus for expression. Counter-protest, because of its expressive urgency and seriousness, is one such theme which does allow some insight into a people's way of thinking.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Alan Dundes, "Folk Ideas as Units of Worldview," in: Towards New Perspectives in Folklore, p. 4.

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Through examination of a conflict situation, it becomes possible to see how folklore operates as a mediating agent between opposing interests. In this respect, folklore is traditional behavior.

Anxieties arise out of situations threatening the life of the group. Expressive folklore assists in maintaining the status quo by giving a "name" to the threatening forces both within and without the group, and by presenting these names in a contrived, artificial form and context, giving the impression that the forces are being controlled.

Yet each conflict context has certain novel, time-specific dimensions. Resolution demands innovative as well as traditional techniques. This capacity for innovation explains why new expressive behaviors are continuously being devised. The emergent qualities of folklore, as stressed by Richard Bauman,<sup>7</sup> become evident in a study such as this; through diachronic analysis of repeated thematic responses, we are able to document the emergence of a culturally-based rhetoric which rationalizes and affirms behavior.

#### The Context

The seal hunt in Newfoundland has been a traditional Spring activity for centuries. It has been the source and inspiration for innumerable songs, stories, and anecdotes which provide Newfoundlanders with a distinctive heritage. Yet the last decade has witnessed a curious phenomenon--

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<sup>6</sup> Abrahams, p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Bauman, "Verbal Art as Performance," American Anthropologist, 77 (1975), p. 302.

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the seal hunt has been challenged by outsiders on social, moral, and ethical grounds. The campaign intensified from its initial whisperings in the late 1950's to a full-scale, international issue by the mid-1960's. As the anti-sealing protest became institutionalized with formal organizations and leadership, Newfoundlanders were forced to respond, not only to protect their industry but, more importantly, to defend their pride and cultural identity.

My thesis does not attempt to review the history of sealing in Newfoundland, nor is it concerned with resolving the issues of protest. Since the controversy is a relatively recent event which continues into the present, the history and social implications have yet to be recorded. In order to appreciate the significance of the songs and poetry which are the central focus of my work it was necessary to devote some attention to the matter. Chapter Two is journalistic in the sense that it reports on the development, events, and personalities who are responsible for initiating and sustaining the protest through the years. The popularity of the sealing campaign is examined in the context of the larger environmental movement which has become one of the major social concerns of our time.

### The Theme

The definition of protest is: "1. to state positively; 2. to speak strongly against, to express disapproval, to object."<sup>8</sup> The activity or expression of protest may take a

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<sup>8</sup> Webster's New World Dictionary of the American

a variety of forms: "verbal criticism, written criticism, petitions, picketing, marches, nonviolent confrontation, e.g., obstruction, nonviolent law-breaking, e.g., 'sitting-in,' obscene language, rock-throwing, milling, wild running, looting, burning, guerilla warfare, etc."<sup>9</sup> Songs, jokes, blason populaires, narratives, jokes, and other expressive forms communicating objection or opposition, are of particular interest to the folklorist though, to date, a rather strict adherence to generic categories has limited analysis of protest contexts.

"Expressive," according to Roger Renwick, describes behavior "that is to some extent emotive and evocative, that deals with feeling, sometimes subordinating to this quality other aspects of expression, like form and content and overt reference."<sup>10</sup> The expressive forms of protest provide an index to the beliefs and values held by a particular group. William Jansen explored this aspect of folklore in his essay, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore."<sup>11</sup> He articulated three features which make a group particularly susceptible to these sometimes unifying, and sometimes

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Language, 2nd College ed. (New York: World Publishing Co., 1972), p. 1142.

<sup>9</sup> Jerome H. Skolnick, The Politics of Protest (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Roger Renwick, Individual Systems of Verse-Making Activity Among Working Class People, PhD Diss. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1974), p. 337.

<sup>11</sup> William Hugh Jansen, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore," The Study of Folklore, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 43-51.

divisive factors: isolation (by age, religion, regionalism, etc.), possession of special knowledge which either is, or seems to be, peculiar, or, when one group is considered by others to be particularly awesome, favored, or admirable."<sup>12</sup>

The esoteric part of this factor, it would seem, frequently stems from the group sense of belonging and serves to defend and strengthen that sense.... The exoteric aspect of the factor is, at least in part, a product of the same sense of belonging, for it may result from fear of, mystification about, or resentment of the group to which one does not belong.<sup>13</sup>

While groups have certain ideas about their own identity as contrasted with other groups, they are not always verbalized. In protest situations, esoteric and exoteric attitudes come to the surface and often are the core of expressive behavior. Negative stereotyping is a common feature of protest. The out-group is portrayed as excessively abusive and malicious, while the in-group is praised for its discipline, maintenance of traditional values and worthy conduct. Polarization tends to occur; the leadership of conflicting interests frequently engage in dialogue in the effort to negotiate a solution, but the membership may perpetuate the conflict through repetition of praise and blame among themselves.

World view is another emergent feature of conflict or protest contexts. "A person does not receive a world view, but rather takes or adopts one. A world view is not a

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 49-50.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 46.



datum, a donné, but something the individual himself or the culture he shares partly constructs."<sup>14</sup> World view generally operates as a sub-conscious cultural feature--it does not have to be articulated when people share common sets of expectations and values. However, when conflict occurs, it indicates disagreement, and often it is necessary to announce these values in the effort to strengthen or reaffirm group loyalty and recruit new members. Since one of the objectives of protest is persuasion (or dissuasion), communication is often deliberate and serious rather than playful. Whenever a group feels threatened, there is a tendency towards idealization. Public appeals are made in the effort to convince members to participate in the reaffirmation of traditional values. In the process, world view--or the underlying principles and cognitive structure of group experience--is made public.

Social movements have a predictable course in that inevitably a "shift from surface consensus to overt conflict" takes place.<sup>15</sup> Although they are a recurring phenomenon, few counter-movements have been studied by social scientists.<sup>16</sup> The anti-sealing protest proceeded for years without being challenged, but with the recognition of

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<sup>14</sup> Walter Ong, "World as View and World as Event," American Anthropologist 71 (1969), p. 634.

<sup>15</sup> Stan L. Albrecht, "Environmental Movements and Counter-Movements," Journal of Voluntary Action Research, V.1, No. 4 (October, 1972), p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

potential and real threat, Newfoundlanders began to respond with countering arguments and action.

My thesis is based on the premise that counter-protest is a distinctive theme, identifiable by defensiveness and rationalization on one hand and, on the other, aggressive and defiant assertions of right. Through examination of pro-seal hunt expressions, I have attempted to explore the nature of counter-protest as it is derivative of Newfoundland culture in general, and as a response to a given conflict in particular.

#### The Performance

Because the sealing controversy was perceived as an attack on Newfoundlanders as well as on the sealing issue, both the arguments and their expressive modes are culture-specific. Popular, cultural communication channels in Newfoundland are open-line radio shows, letters-to-the-editor columns, and books, magazines, etc. Poetry and song have traditionally been favored forms, and they are employed to perform the following functions: "1. Surveillance of the environment; 2) the correlation of the parts of society in responding to the environment; 3) the transmission of the social heritage from one generation to the next."<sup>17</sup>

Drawing evidence from both oral and literary sources, I have constructed a typology of rhetorical strategies

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<sup>17</sup> Harold Lasswell, "The Structure and Function of Communications in Society," Mass Communication, ed. Wilbur Schramm (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1960), p. 118.

which manifest themselves in all the forms of sealing counter-protest. The fact that there are a limited number of arguments offered in rebuttal to accusations is noteworthy from a cultural, perceptual standpoint, while differentials in communicative competence are revealed through variations on these several themes. Further, these arguments are presented within a relatively narrow tonal range, usually serious, but occasionally satirical or facetious.

I have suggested there is a partial relationship between the functions of classical rhetoric and the rhetoric of counter-protest. Counter-protest combines all three modes of appeal: praise and blame (for honor and dishonor), accusation and defense (for issues concerning justice and injustice), and deliberative argumentation to weigh advantage versus potential injury.

Using Kenneth Burke's theory of grouping literature on the basis of a common strategic element, and R. Serge Denisoff's description of protest songs, I have focused on emotion and emotional appeal as the significant attribute of counter-protest. Letters, calls to radio programs, verses and songs are typically spontaneous responses to feelings of outrage, frustration, and pride.

A classification by rhetorical strategy and communicative intent enables one to group items which are ostensibly separate and unique forms and, at the same time, to encompass the expressions of people from a wide spectrum of

social and economic backgrounds. Anti-sealing protest is an issue which stirs the emotions and pride of many Newfoundlanders, regardless of their personal status or involvement with the fishery. In this respect, it is possible to include the counter-protest verses of John Crosbie, M.P., noted poet Art Scammell, professional folk singers, together with novice poets. While the verses and songs in Chapter Five are arranged by somewhat arbitrary criteria, i.e., personal performance status, it is not an evaluative or critical classification scheme, but simply an organizing principle.

#### The Methodology

When I first began my study, I intended to examine newspaper poetry with the purpose of identifying characteristic features of folk poetry. In the process of looking at micro-filmed copies of the St. John's (Newfoundland) Evening Telegram from 1970 to the present, I discovered several poems devoted to the sealing issue. At the same time, current newspapers were reporting and editorializing about the anticipated protest in March, 1978, as well as the Provincial government's travelling campaign to counter misinformation. Having read Cassie Brown's Death on the Ice at Christmas, and being absolutely spellbound by that account, I was emotionally and mentally geared to learn everything I possibly could about the sealing industry today.

Although there were some initial reservations about the amount of material I could recover considering the

recent compilation of sealing songs and poetry, Haulin' Rope and Gaff, by Shannon Ryan and Larry Small,<sup>18</sup> I decided to pursue this topic with emphasis on contemporary expressions. Through exploration of a variety of sources and forms, I came to the conclusion that counter-protest was an important theme transcending formal generic boundaries.

My only criteria for analysis were: 1) the item expressed an opinion about the protest or protesters, and 2) the item or opinion was shared with others and therefore was a deliberate social communicative act rather than a personal, idiosyncratic and introspective act. In effect, I borrowed Roger Renwick's rationale for studying verses:

The act of composition of a complete poem or song that was my entry point into my data I take to be, in its most complete manifestation, a particular purposive way of comprehending, formulating, expressing, and giving meaning to experience, so that one may communicate knowledge, feeling, and judgment about that experience to others and possibly influence their attitudes and behaviors as well.<sup>19</sup>

Although I read the back issues of the Evening Telegram from 1971 to the present, and scoured the Provincial Archives, the Department of Folklore Archives, as well as the University and public libraries for relevant information, I must acknowledge my debt to the serendipity factor.

Many items were discovered by chance, others were referrals from friends and associates who were kind enough

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<sup>18</sup> Shannon Ryan and Larry Small, comp. Haulin' Rope & Gaff (St. John's: Breakwater Books, Ltd. 1978).

<sup>19</sup> Renwick, p. 36.

to share my interest and their knowledge. Finally, several verses were sent to me in response to a brief letter I sent to newspapers around the Province. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to go to St. Anthony in March, 1978, so I was able to witness what remained of the protest effort, and talk with many residents who had been involved in previous years.

It is my sincerest hope that through this study, a small but significant part of Newfoundland's social history has been recorded, enabling future researchers to pursue the topics I could not explore. In addition, I have tried to identify a new theme of importance to folklore, believing that inter-group conflict creates a heightened sense of self-consciousness and dedication to traditional values. In the effort to articulate the features of counter-protest, I have drawn on theories and methodologies from folklore and various social science disciplines, using examples from radio, television, newspapers, and other printed sources to support my thesis.

Note: Quotations and verses have been reprinted exactly as collected, therefore errors in spelling and punctuation may occur throughout the text.

## II. THE SEALING PROTEST

### History

External public interest in sealing began in the late 1950's. Whereas my interest lies not so much with the protest as with expressions of counter-protest; it is essential to survey the events and concerns which preceded the reactionary counter-movement of the 1970's. While most Newfoundlanders think of Brian Davies and the Greenpeace Foundation when the term "protester" is mentioned, the fact remains that they were relative late-comers to the anti-sealing cause.

A partial explanation of the indignation and defensive attitude taken by Newfoundlanders today, lies with the fact that earlier abuses were rectified through strict government regulation. Continuous supervision by the Department of Fisheries insures that quotas are respected and that killing is conducted by humane methods. Canadian and international humane societies were the agents responsible for instituting changes and though their appeals were strongly worded, their appeal was not emotional. Their motives could not be challenged since they did not solicit the public for funds or support as did the later wave of protest organizations.

Newfoundlanders themselves have not always remained quiet about conditions at the ice. In 1960, Harold Horwood wrote an article detailing sealing brutalities,

and a recent poet criticized the premature killing of seal pups.<sup>1</sup> Two stanzas from "Uncle John the Sealer" are reprinted below:

For over forty years and more  
A sealer he has been.  
He says "That killing infant seals,  
He never'fore has seen.

But now as soon as they are pupped,  
Before they're any good  
You're forced to murder in cold blood  
The baby harp' and hood.  
-Solomon Samson (1951)

In 1978, a Twillingate native, Ray Elliott, gained notoriety for touring with Brian Davies and telling audiences he had skinned harp pups while they were still alive. Though Horwood and the poet, Samson, expressed their opinions within acceptable bounds, Elliott's participation was viewed as treasonous and misrepresentative of contemporary sealing practices.

Since the history of the protest has yet to be properly documented, a chronological summary of events is needed to lend perspective to the rhetoric of counter-protest. The Ontario Humane Society, in the March, 1972, issue of their publication, Animals' Voice, printed a list of their activities on behalf of the seals. I have borrowed extensively from that source, and use the initials, "AV," to indicate direct quotation.

1955 (May 30) Meeting in Halifax, Nova Scotia, to discuss killing methods used in the seal fishery,

<sup>1</sup> Solomon Samson, A Glimpse of Newfoundland in Poetry and Pictures, ed. Robert Saunders (Poole: J. Looker, Ltd., 1960), p. 39.



chaired by Myles Murray, President of the Nova Scotia S.P.C. 'The meeting was held in response to public concern regarding humane practices which were stimulated by Dr. H. Lillie, who had recently observed seal hunting and made a film; Department of Fisheries biologist, Dr. David Sargeant, stated he was not satisfied with killing methods and recommended needed improvements... Dr. H.D. Fisher commented, "inhumane killing was not the rule, but he did agree cruelty did occur due to haste and rivalry.' (AV)

1960 "Tragedy on the Whelping Ice," published in Canadian Audubon, V.22, No.2 (March-April), pp. 37-41.

1964 Ontario Humane Society submitted proposed amendments to the Seal Protection Regulations, issued by the the Department of Fisheries. (AV)

Artek film--Radio Canada commissioned Artek films to shoot footage of the Magdalen Islands seal hunt. Andre Fleury, Producer, with Uwe Koenemann, Assistant Producer.

"Murder Island," article by Peter Lust (Montreal) reprinted in West German newspapers, (April).

Radio Canada broadcasts Artek film on public television in May.

Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson, sent letter to Montreal Star editor, "...It is the government's intention to see, that this fishery which has provided an annual crop for more than a century continues to flourish and is conducted with efficiency and humanity."<sup>2</sup> (July)

Munich and Hamburg (West Germany) humane societies enter the protest through news releases.

1965 Department of Fisheries issued a statement on March 16 noting the reduction of the harp seal population to levels below maximum sustainable yield. Arrangements made for official observers to be present in the Gulf of St. Lawrence for the 1966 hunt. (AV)

1966 Observers from Canadian and Boston humane societies attended the hunt. Skulls of slaughtered animals were examined to determine whether they had been

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Lust, The Last Seal Pup (Montreal: Harvest House, 1967), p. 58.

dead before skinning. While the majority were, a few were not. Most observers believed the animals were unconscious and felt no pain. (AV)

(June) Ottawa meeting convened by Minister of Fisheries, the Hon. H.J. Robichaud. Humane society officials, ship owners, a representative of the Newfoundland Federation of Fishermen, and regional Fisheries Department officials were in attendance. Regulations for the 1967 hunt were announced, including several recommendations proposed by the Ontario Humane Society. Revisions included:

- All sealers, including landmen, were required to be licensed.
- The gaff was prohibited as a killing instrument, and regulation club sizes were established.
- Low-calibre rifles were outlawed.
- No incision could be made until the seal was dead beyond doubt.
- Sealing activity was restricted to the hours of 6 A.M. to 6 P.M.
- Fisheries officers were empowered to suspend licenses of violators immediately. (AV)

Henri Stadt, a former Artek soundman, produced his own sealing film because he objected to the Artek version.

1967 Observers at the hunt reported the effectiveness of the new sealing regulations. (AV)

Brian Davies and the New Brunswick S.P.C.A. made a film, "The Seals of the Ice Pans."

Peter Lust's, The Last Seal Pup, is published.

1968 Official observers agreed the hunt was as humane as any slaughter house operation and probably as humane as regulation and enforcement could ensure. (AV)

The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry conducted public meetings in April to investigate the sealing controversy. "The Committee concluded that grossly misleading information had been purveyed to the general public in Canada and abroad. Irresponsibility had been shown by the producers of the Artek film (1964), and by the C.B.C. for not inquiring into its accuracy before screening." (AV)

Henri Stadt viewed Davies' film and remarked,

"I think the film stinks and I think the man who did that film not only sold himself but all of us in the country--purely and simply." <sup>3</sup>

Brian Davies was questioned about his income and the role of the New Brunswick S.P.C.A. in the "Save the Seals" campaign. Davies remarked: "I think it (sealing) brutalizes a man. it makes him something different perhaps to you and I when he goes out into this very beautiful area and proceeds to club x number of baby seals." <sup>4</sup>

John Lundrigan replied, "I submit, Mr. Chairman, that I have met thousands of these sealers and the fact that we have the witness here today is an example that they are very humane because nobody has taken any vendetta against the gentleman." <sup>5</sup>

1969 (Summer) Brian Davies breaks with the New Brunswick S.P.C.A. and organizes, "The International Fund for Animal Welfare."

(October 15) The Department of Fisheries announced a ban on the killing of whitecoat pups in 1970. All types of aircraft were banned from sealing operations. (AV)

1970 Official observers expressed satisfaction about enforcement of new regulations. (AV)

1971 (March) Protests in New York city at Air Canada and Canadian consulate offices. "European Committee for the Protection of Seals" offered to pay sealers to stay home. <sup>6</sup>

Brian Davies escorted a group of American youngsters to the Gulf hunt to dramatize the issue. <sup>7</sup>

Minister of Fisheries, Mr. Jack Davis, established a "Special Advisory Committee on Seals and Sealing."

<sup>3</sup> Canada. House of Commons. Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry. Proceedings, No. 14 (April 15, 1969) p. 363.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 425.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 425.

<sup>6</sup> St. John's Evening Telegram (March 3, 1971), p.1.

<sup>7</sup> Evening Telegram (March 9, 1971), p.6.

- 1972 Brian Davies returned to observe in the Gulf. The Interim Report of the Committee on Seals and Sealing recommended a phasing out of the Canadian and Norwegian seal hunt by 1974, followed by a minimum six-year moratorium on sealing.
- 1974 No Newfoundland ships go to the ice; Newfoundlanders signed aboard Halifax-based vessels. Protest continues through the media.
- 1975 Observation continued with media protest.
- 1976 Brian Davies hired a crew of airline stewardesses to join him at St. Anthony and go to the ice.

Greenpeace threatened to spray the seal pups with green dye, then rescinded the plan after a public meeting in St. Anthony, stating: "We respect your style of living and we don't want to interfere with your livelihood;... join with us in stopping the Norwegians so there will be more seals for you in the future."<sup>8</sup>

Richard Cashin requested Greenpeace co-operation to join the battle for establishing a 200-mile limit for Canadian fishing vessels.

A small demonstration in front of Decker's Boarding House in St. Anthony is conducted by Newfoundlanders protesting the presence of Greenpeace volunteers. Placards read: "Save the Fisherman;" "We want more than your dye;" "Great place--Wrong Issue;" "Sympathy is not Enough;" "Red Dye for Russian Trawlers, Norwegian Ships;" etc.<sup>9</sup>

- 1977 Brian Davies rented the entire Viking Motel (St. Anthony) for his core of press and actress Yvette Mimieux.

300 demonstrators picketed the motel and surrounded Davies' helicopters until RCMP officers demanded they remove themselves or be arrested.

Brigitte Bardot appears in Blanc Sablon at the Greenpeace base camp. Her photo is taken with a stuffed seal pup, which later was to become the topic of controversy when press releases suggested the pup was alive.

<sup>8</sup> Evening Telegram (March 10, 1976), p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Evening Telegram (March 13, 1976), p. 3.

Greenpeace member, Paul Watson, hand-cuffed himself to the winches of the Martin Karlsen.

1978 The Newfoundland government scheduled press conferences across North America and in several European cities to present the Newfoundland case for sealing, (January and February).

Brian Davies and Ray Elliott appeared in Europe to denounce the hunt as cruel and barbarous.

Progressive Rights Organization sponsored an old-time, "Sealers' Send-Off," in St. John's, and organized concerts, displays and literature to tell "the other side" of the sealing story.

The Mummers Troupe toured Canadian cities with their play, "They Club Seals, Don't They?"

U. S. Congressmen witnessed the hunt with Greenpeace members from San Francisco, Oregon, and Vancouver branches.

Greenpeace President, Dr. Patrick Moore, arrested on two charges; loitering in a public place (a temporary Fisheries Department office), and for obstructing the hunt.

While sealing operations had been observed for nearly a decade, the first confrontation at the ice between "come-from-away" protesters and the Newfoundland sealers occurred in 1976. The situation was exacerbated by the presence of international journalists and media people who were eager to report incidents of physical violence or verbal abuse.

Brian Davies hired a team of airline stewardesses to accompany him with a crew of reporters to the ice. While sealers were instructed to ignore the protesters, the women shouted, "You butchers, you bloody butchers," and, "Do you sleep at night...will you be able to eat your dinner today? You must feel very brave killing those little animals. What

men, what brave men."<sup>10</sup> Davies was later charged with two violations of the Seal Protection Regulations: for landing a helicopter less than one-half nautical mile from any seal, and operating a chopper over seals at an altitude of less than 2,000 feet.<sup>11</sup>

After a public meeting with St. Anthony residents and other concerned citizens, the Greenpeace Foundation agreed not to spray-paint the seals, but they maintained their avowed position to see the whitecoat hunt abolished. Junior Abbott, a Musgrave Harbour man, gave this interpretation of the 1976 protesters:

"I'll give my opinion on the female people who are going to come down here. We all have long hair and modern looks. What are they supposed to be, the Delilah of the new age? And what are they going to do, cut off our hair and poke our eyes out? I had my wife with me last year; she was out for a week with me and nobody knew she was a woman for the way she dressed. So I can only picture these young ladies out there in sheer cloth and those poor things are going to freeze to death."<sup>12</sup>

There were no incidents at the ice, but there were many threats in anticipation of aggravation. "Newfoundland people are like the Newfoundland dog who is very kind and very gentle until you make him angry and then he can become very vicious."<sup>13</sup> Senator F.W. Rowe was sufficiently concerned prior to the opening of the hunt that he sent a

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<sup>10</sup> Evening Telegram (March 16, 1976), p.1.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>12</sup> Decks Awash (April, 1976), p.8.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

letter of warning to Romeo LeBlanc, federal Fisheries Minister:

We must be realistic in this matter and recognize that seal hunters are armed with lethal instruments...it would require only one sealer out of hundreds involved, to be goaded to the point of desperation, for a tragedy to result...; Moreover, the possibility of a fatal accident should not be overlooked, especially if, as reported in today's Globe and Mail, Mr. Brian Davies carries out the unbelievably stupid suggestion of using airline stewardesses to interfere with the seal hunt.<sup>14</sup>

The 1977 protest in St. Anthony was a carnival with a number of side-shows. Brian Davies rented the entire Viking Motel for his contingent of press and protesters. On March 14, an estimated crowd of 250 to 300 demonstrators surrounded Davies' helicopters, while others tried to delay his departure by blocking the motel exit with their bodies. Nearly one hundred RCMP officers were called in to protect Davies and ensure there would not be any violence.

The failure of both the Federal and Provincial governments to take a firm stand on behalf of the sealing industry led to the formation of two independent organizations-- Concerned Citizens of St. Anthony and the Society for the Retention of Our Sealing Industry--and it was the combined membership of these two groups who manned the picket lines. Provincial Fisheries Minister, Walter Carter, made himself unpopular by warning the demonstrators not to engage in any illegal activity, and many viewed this as a political sell-

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<sup>14</sup> Evening Telegram (February 17, 1976), p.6.

out.

After a twenty-four hour vigil at the Viking Motel, a public meeting was convened at the St. Anthony high school auditorium, attended by some four hundred people. Carter, local politicians, fisheries officers, and representatives of the clergy stood together on the platform to tell the audience, "We're fighting for our very survival in Newfoundland," and warned, "Protesters should not interpret our patience as weakness."<sup>15</sup> (See Photographs #1 & 2).

The protest "circus" featured two movie stars--Yvette Mimieux and Brigitte Bardot--creating a minor distraction for the press, but they did not accomplish much in the way of obstructing the hunt. Bardot apparently appeared at the invitation of Franz Weber, a Swiss millionaire-conservationist who joined the ranks of protesters in 1977. At a February news conference in St. John's, Weber announced his plans to establish a synthetic fur industry to recompense the Newfoundland sealers once the hunt was abolished. He also revealed that his offer "to buy" the lives of baby seals for \$400,000 had been rejected by Romeo LeBlanc. Plans to charter a "floating hotel" to accomodate six hundred journalists to witness the hunt were greeted with amusement by the press and public.

The Greenpeace Foundation set up their headquarters in Blanc Sablon, Quebec, across the Strait of Belle Isle.

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<sup>15</sup> Evening Telegram (March 15, 1977), p.1.



The rationale for staying at a distance was articulated by Patrick Moore: "They'd love to turn this into a Greenpeace versus Newfoundlanders thing, rather than Greenpeacers versus the seal hunt thing. That's why we're not getting involved in any of the demonstrations. We're not accusing the people here of anything."<sup>16</sup> One of their team gained notoriety for hand-cuffing himself to the hauling winches of the Martin Karlsen while loading seal pelts. Watson was dunked several times in the ocean, but was later taken aboard and given dry clothes and food. Greenpeace press releases suggested the dunking was deliberate, but other reporters on the scene did not concur.

One of the most distressing aspects of the protest was the receipt of "hate letters" addressed to St. Anthony residents. Many letters were written by elementary school children and were filled with vicious threats. The St. Anthony Committee returned bundles of the mail to United States Senator Edward Kennedy and President Jimmy Carter, suggesting that schools were inappropriate places for propaganda.

On March 22, 1978, the United States House of Representatives heard a resolution, introduced by Congressman Leo Ryan (California), which called on the "Canadian government to review its policy of allowing the 'barbarous' killing of new-born seals in the annual hunt; ...killing

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<sup>16</sup> Ottawa Citizen (March 16, 1977), p. 7.

seals by clubbing them on the head is a cruel practice that may cause the species to become extinct." The Canadian House of Commons responded on March 24th with a resolution of support for the annual hunt, stating all efforts would be made to ensure strict supervision.<sup>17</sup>

As previously noted, two independent citizens' groups were formed to counter the protest since the official government policy was to ignore the protesters. However, in 1977, the Newfoundland government contributed \$6,000 to the organizations in support of their efforts. In May, the St. Anthony Concerned Citizens merged with the Trinity Bay Society for the Retention of the Sealing Industry, and they drew up a constitution for the new body, the Progressive Rights Organization. Article 2 contains their statement of purpose: "To inform people of their rights, to act as an agency to insure these rights are respected and upheld to the end, that they may be able to effectively counter misinformation and propaganda in respect to the way of life in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador," etc.

In 1978, the Progressive Rights Organization was funded by a Canada Works grant, funds from the Resource Foundation for the Arts, and the Provincial government. Eight people were hired to work for the twenty-week period corresponding to the annual protest effort. Their duties included answering letters of inquiry from the Mainland

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<sup>17</sup> Canadian News Facts (1977), p. 1739.

and abroad, as well as soliciting support from industry and service organizations within the Province.

The PRO revived the traditional sealers' send-off ceremony and, on March 5th, an estimated crowd of 4,000 well-wishers attended the waterfront service conducted by representatives from all the major religious denominations in the city. In St. Anthony, PRO headquarters were open to the public, and members were available to answer questions and provide information about the hunt.

Premier Frank Moores and the Newfoundland government finally took an aggressive stand vis-a-vis the protesters in early 1978. A series of press conferences--New York, Boston, Washington, Chicago, Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Paris, London, and Frankfurt--were scheduled to present the Newfoundland position on the hunt. Essentially a media campaign, it was directed at journalists who heretofore had been exposed to protesters' arguments with little contradiction. Moores was accompanied by Walter Carter, Provincial Fisheries Minister; John Lundrigan, the Minister of Industrial and Rural Development; Thomas Hughes, Executive Vice-President of the Ontario Humane Society; Dr. Joseph MacInnis, marine biologist; Dr. Harry Rowsell and Dr. H. Bruno Schiefer, pathologists; Mac Mercer, senior policy advisor with the Department of Fisheries; Jim Winter, a CBC commentator; and Captain Morrissey Johnson, skipper of the Newfoundland vessel, the Lady Johnson II.

The protest itself was quiet in comparison to 1976 and 1977. Only Greenpeace returned to Newfoundland, but Brian Davies was vocal in his European effort to arouse sympathy for his cause. On February 27, 1978, Greenpeace members in rubber rafts attempted to obstruct the sealing vessels as they left the Halifax harbor en route to St. John's. Though law enforcement agencies were prepared for a repeat attempt in St. John's on March 5th, there were no incidents by Greenpeace protesters.

Twenty Greenpeacers made the trip to St. Anthony, including two screen actresses and two United States Congressmen, James Jeffords (Vermont), and Leo Ryan (California). Newfoundlanders were angered by the presence of the Congressmen, and John Lundrigan confronted them at the ice, saying, "Go back and straighten up your own country and get your own house in order."<sup>18</sup> It was never clear why the two were in St. Anthony, although Mr. Jeffords stated he was there at the invitation of the Canadian government.<sup>19</sup>

Aside from that incident, Greenpeace activity was hampered both by ice conditions and new Fisheries Department regulations. The seals were whelping off the coast of Labrador, making them inaccessible to helicopters from St. Anthony. Permits were mandatory for anyone wishing to observe the hunt (Appendix 2), but anyone whose express

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<sup>18</sup> Evening Telegram (March 13, 1978), p.1.

<sup>19</sup> Conversation with James Jeffords, (March 9, 1978).

purpose was to obstruct the hunt was denied a permit. Dr. Patrick Moore was arrested on two occasions, once for trespassing when he refused to leave a temporary Department of Fisheries office at the St. Anthony motel, and later, after being granted a one-day permit to go to the ice, he sat on a seal to protect it from being clubbed and he was arrested for obstructing the hunt. Further activity was cancelled when the Fisheries Department announced that the press would not be allowed to accompany any Greenpeace member to the scene of sealing operations and, in effect, eliminated all opportunities for publicity.

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#### Analysis

In order to understand why such a protest as the anti-sealing campaign occurred at all, it is necessary to consider the issue in the context of the larger environmental movement. While an entire thesis could be devoted to this subject alone, I would like to provide some preliminary, background information and add a few personal observations with regard to this phenomena in Newfoundland.

"Earth Day," April 22, 1970, is the acknowledged birthdate of the contemporary environmental movement. A legacy of earlier preservation and conservation interests, "...this movement must be viewed as one of the most important social movements of recent history. It evolved out of a growing belief that the world faces an ultimate 'eco-catastrophe' unless immediate and successful efforts

are made to halt the destruction of the environment, and has gone on to attract the support of hundreds of thousands of people in its cause."<sup>20</sup> The activists are drawn from an educated elite, with access to wealth and the coercive means to affect protest and ultimately change.<sup>21</sup>

...now, more than ever before, nature appears to have acquired expressive meaning for the American people rather than being, as before, merely an object for consumptive use and conquest.<sup>22</sup>

This point is demonstrated by sealing protester, Pamela Sue Martin, who commented to John Baker, a CBC reporter:

...it's a shame to treat nature this way in this day and age because with the seals there are substitutes for anything they can possibly get from the seals...when I was coming over in the helicopter...I'm constantly impressed with the beauty here and the way everything is, and I couldn't help thinking that...I would think the people here would want to preserve their resources and preserve this area and keep it this way always.<sup>23</sup>

Although initially there was widespread ideological agreement with environmental principles, as traditional values were challenged and threatened, opposition began to mount. Stan Albrecht suggests the explanation may reside

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<sup>20</sup> Stan L. Albrecht, "Legacy of the Environmental Movement," Environment and Behavior 8 (1976), p. 149.

<sup>21</sup> Daniel J. Koenig, "Additional Research on Environmental Activism," Environment and Behavior 7 (1975), p. 475.

<sup>22</sup> Stan L. Albrecht, "Environmental Social Movements & Counter-Movements," Journal of Voluntary Action Research 1 (1972), p.3.

<sup>23</sup> Pamela Sue Martin, Interview with John Baker, CBC-TV, Here and Now (March 23, 1978).

with existing belief systems and expectations for the environment. With respect to the environmentalists:

"...their higher social status allows them to feel economically independent of the forest and river as a source of livelihood and to view them rather as a source of beauty and aesthetic appreciation."<sup>24</sup> In contrast, the counter movement relies on the exploitation of nature, and emphasis is therefore given to utilitarian values and maintenance of the status quo.<sup>25</sup>

Certainly this is an accurate assessment when one considers the constituency of the Greenpeace Foundation and their concern with a "universal ecosystem." Newfoundlanders, on the other hand, do not perceive the protest in light of environmental degradation, but see it as a direct threat to their traditional way of life and economic welfare. Since this point will be argued in greater detail in the following chapters, I will not elaborate except to suggest that the two sides will never be in agreement while social and economic discrepancies remain between them.

Anthony Downs studied what he terms "the issue-attention cycle" with regard to the American concern with ecology. His model has both analytic and predictive value for the Newfoundland example, and it is useful because it

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<sup>24</sup> Stan L. Albrecht, "Environmental Social Movements & Counter-Movements," p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> Anthony Downs, "Up and Down with Ecology- the issue attention cycle," The Public Interest 28 (Summer, 1972), pp. 39-40.

permits examination of the sealing issue by stages:

1. Pre-problem stage: undesirable conditions exist, but have not yet captured public attention.
2. Alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm.
3. Realizing the cost of significant progress--the cost of 'solving' the problem is recognized as being extremely high.
4. Gradual decline of intense public interest; the public has several reactions--some are discouraged, others feel threatened, some are bored.
5. Post-problem stage: "the twilight realm of lesser attention or spasmodic recurrences of interest."<sup>26</sup>

The pre-problem stage of the sealing protest dates from 1957 to 1963. Several humane societies were concerned about abuses in the hunt and sent teams of observers to report on sealing activities. The 1964 Artek film marked the beginning of the period of "alarmed discovery," and increased public attention to the issue. With the publication of Peter Lust's The Last Seal Pup and Brian Davies' Savage Luxury (1970), the sealing controversy escalated into a full-scale media campaign.

In the meantime, pressure from humane societies resulted in the revision of the "Seal Protection Regulations" at the Federal level. Sealing quotas, licenses, weapons, and killing methods were mandated by law. Conflicting measurement techniques perpetuated the conflict, for no one was quite certain about the status of the harp (seal) population.

Protesters were quick to make suggestions about

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<sup>26</sup> Anthony Downs, p. 42.



alternative activities to replace the income earned from sealing, but by Stage 3 the economic realities of island life became quite evident. Stage 4--the gradual decline of public interest--began in late 1977 and continues to the present. While one cannot anticipate the final year of protest, inevitably the issue will enter the post-problem stage and the intensity of the issue will diminish.

Downs suggests, "this increase in our environmental aspirations is part of a general cultural phenomenon stimulated both by our success in raising living standards and by the recent emphasis of the communications media."<sup>27</sup> He believes the media is the crucial arbiter of public consciousness about any particular issue, and certainly this view is shared by many Newfoundlanders who argue the press should not be allowed to photograph hunt activities.

A problem must be dramatic and exciting to maintain public interest because news is 'consumed' by much of the American public (and by publics everywhere) largely as a form of entertainment; ... (yet) the media's sustained focus on this problem soon bores the majority of the public.<sup>28</sup>

I do not have a statistical summary of media time devoted to the seal hunt over the years, but it was true-- coverage was substantially reduced in 1978 as compared with previous years. Also, the 1978 protesting contingent in St. Anthony was smaller than preceding campaigns, which I attribute to the issue's inability to sustain emotional responsiveness.

<sup>27</sup> Anthony Downs, p. 42.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

Several explanations are offered for the protesters' success in terms of gaining public and financial support: 1) the remoteness of the hunt, and 2) the lack of contradictory information to challenge protesters' claims. Downs emphasizes this point with regard to the strength of other environmental issues:

Gathering support for attacking any problem is always easier if its ills can be blamed on a small number of 'public enemies'--as is shown by the success of Ralph Nader. This tactic is particularly effective if the 'enemies' exhibit extreme wealth and power, eccentric dress and manners, obscene language, or some other uncommon traits. Then society can aim its outrage at a small, alien group without having to face up to the need to alter its own behavior.<sup>29</sup>

In Newfoundland, this is confirmed by Jim Winter, a CBC reporter who went to the ice in 1977:

They have recognized that it is easy to get people steamed up about something which is undoubtedly unpleasant to see. And because people know nothing of the activity, it is easy to get them to donate literally millions of dollars to stop it. The donation does not directly affect the donors' way of life.<sup>30</sup>

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This brief review of the history of the sealing protest has attempted to document the principal actors and events which stimulated expressions of counter-protest. As with any institutionalized protest, rivalry and internal conflicts developed and, though it is beyond the scope of this thesis, I would like to suggest areas for future

<sup>29</sup> Anthony Downs, p. 47.

<sup>30</sup> Decks Awash, 7 (February, 1978), p.37.

## investigation:

- 1) Brian Davies versus the humane societies: the 1969 House of Commons hearings suggest the conflict of interest between Davies and other organizations was already apparent.
- 2) Greenpeace and environmental groups: through time, the leadership hierarchy changed, as did ideology, strategy, and energy. To what extent this reflects an internal power struggle, and how this compares with other such groups, is an opportunity for investigative journalism as well as for students of group dynamics.
- 3) The Progressive Rights Organization: documentation of its history and its emergence from a grass-roots movement to a government-supported group would be a worthy study from a political as well as social view.
- 4) Finally, the whole "carnival" approach to the protest, as described by columnist Ray Guy and other writers since 1977, is a fascinating topic.<sup>31</sup> It suggests a distinctive attitudinal shift, emanating from the media and gradually making its way into the public mind. As Eli Bryant, President of the PRO, remarked in St. Anthony, "if only Brian Davies and his crew would come back this year, it would be fun because now we are ready for them. Last year we were nervous and didn't know what would happen."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Evening Telegram (February 25, 1978), p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Eli Bryant, Interview in St. Anthony (March 10, 1978).



Photograph 1: Demonstration at the Viking Motel (March, 1977)  
-D. Green



Photograph 2: Bill Short and Brian Davies, St. Anthony (March, 1977) (D. Green)

### III. COUNTER-PROTEST: THEME AND EXPRESSIONS

John Greenway defined protest songs as "struggle songs of the people":

They are outbursts of bitterness, of hatred for the oppressor, of determination to endure hardships together and to fight for a better life. Whether they are ballads composed and sung by an individual or rousing songs improvised on the picket line, they are imbued with the feeling of communality, or togetherness. They are songs of unity and therefore most are songs of the union.<sup>1</sup>

Protest songs are emotional responses to unpleasant circumstances. Characteristically spontaneous and unadorned, they are occasional songs because they are topical, emerging from specific conflict situations. The criteria for traditional folksongs, i.e., reflexivity, redundancy, conventionality, and concreteness, also apply to protest songs. Melodies are often borrowed or adapted from already familiar songs to facilitate acceptance and repetition.

Inevitably, protest songs lose their currency as conditions change or, since the human capacity for tolerating anxiety is limited, individuals may adjust or withdraw from the conflict. When a song loses its appeal for singers and an audience, it either disappears, or

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<sup>1</sup> John Greenway, American Folksongs of Protest (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), p. 10.

enters an inactive status in a singer's repertory.<sup>2</sup>

For this failure to persist in tradition, protest songs were long discredited, but recent scholars have revised this attitude, and they are now recognized as a legitimate sub-genre of folksong.<sup>3</sup>

The folksong revival brought renewed attention to topical songs, and their popularity corresponded with contemporary social consciousness and activism. Typically, a protest or topical song is composed by a "folk entrepreneur," defined as: "an individual who composes and performs songs in the folk idiom in order to exploit a market outside of the original folk group."<sup>4</sup> Consequently, "the songs become subservient to a personal cause or goal-- to get on a gravy train, to propagandize, to entertain, to draw personal attention, or any other extrinsic reason."<sup>5</sup>

While specific, situational conflict will stimulate the composition of protest songs, i.e., spontaneous, emotional expressions, it is not uncommon to find both folk and entrepreneurial compositions circulating simultaneously.

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<sup>2</sup> Kenneth S. Goldstein, "On the Application of the Concepts of Active and Inactive Traditions to the Study of Repertory," Towards New Perspectives in Folklore, ed. Americo Paredes and Richard Bauman (Austin: University of Texas, 1972), p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> John Greenway, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> R. Serge Denisoff, Sing A Song of Social Significance (Bowling Green: University Popular Press, 1972, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

The problem for folksong scholars is no longer identification or definition, but is the question of analyzing and interpreting the contexts which inspire expressive commentary. Emphasis on context requires an in-depth examination of the nature of opposition between contestants, and reference to the historical development of the conflict is essential. Participants, issues, and forms of expression are inter-related and derivative of particular and cumulative tensions.

A proper analysis of any protest requires both diachronic and synchronic study. While various expressive forms, i.e., genres, be they bumper-stickers, signs, songs, or verses, emerge and circulate concurrently, their strength and comprehensibility is rooted in shared experience. In prolonged protest situations, formulaic responses will inevitably emerge. Through study of these expressions, it is possible to postulate how communities categorize experience. Perhaps more significantly, we can learn something about the mechanisms devised and relied upon to cope with threatening problems.

Dell Hymes, in "The Ethnography of Speaking," suggests an etic approach for the analysis of communicative events. He names seven factors or components which are relevant: a sender or addresser, a receiver or addressee, a message form, a channel, a code, a topic, and setting, scene, or situation. The inter-relationships between these components make an event or performance unique, yet when certain



clustering of components occurs, it is possible to identify distinctive categories of speech (or speaking) events.<sup>6</sup>

One of the essential arguments of this thesis is that protest and counter-protest are such categories. Protest songs and lore have been studied by folklorists, but little attention has been devoted to counter-protest as a separate theme. It is re-actionary (counter-actionary), usually defensive and often aggressive in tone. Sometimes it strives to persuade, but its essential function is to justify and rationalize. Highly suggestible, it seizes upon themes, characters and events which emerge from protest situations. It is conservative rather than innovative in that counter-protest responds to, and elaborates upon, situations already created by protesters. Expressive forms of counter-protest reveal culturally-specific patterning, and a close examination of message content should reveal: 1) the perceived source of conflict, and 2) cultural attitudes and values which normally remain in the private, unconscious domain, but surface when threatened.

Using Hymes' model, it is possible to identify counter-protest of two types. The first is generally a group or collective effort. Directed towards an external audience, it is descriptive, heavily factual, and relies

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<sup>6</sup> Dell Hymes, "Toward Ethnographies of Communication," Language and Social Context ed. Pier Pablo Giglioli (Penguin Books, 1972), p. 19.

on persuasion through deliberate appeal to the intellect. The second category is personal, highly individualistic--the appeal is spontaneous, emotional, and argumentative. Frequently the audience consists of members of the same interest group, and the message functions to affirm allegiance and conviction rather than to reverse opinion.

#### COUNTER-PROTEST

Components	Type I	Type II
Sender (addresser)	group	individual
audience (addressees)	external	internal
message form	information	opinion, testimonial and reminiscence
channel	reason intellect	emotions
codes	formal	informal
topics (arguments)	collective	personal
setting	public	private & public

In Newfoundland, the sealing controversy generated considerable counter-protest, both from individuals and other, more formal, agencies. Group or collective counter-protest (PRO, the Provincial government campaign, the Mummers' play), was mainly directed at an external audience--the Mainland, Europe, and the United States. Carefully planned in advance, the message form appealed intellectually, with documentation via statistics and facts. The settings were public--press conferences,

theatres, the sending-off ceremony, or via widespread circulation of brochures. Communication was affected through collective effort with emphasis on authority, legitimacy, and group solidarity.

In contrast, individuals usually directed their arguments to insiders, which was basically a pro-hunt audience to begin with. Callers to open-line shows and many verse-makers responded to provocation immediately; their actions were reflexive rather than reflective. The message was an emotional appeal, and arguments were typically personal experience narratives. Esoteric language and vernacular expressions were common features since rationalization and promotion of internal solidarity were primary functions.

Because counter-protest is defensive, expressive forms stress negative qualities of opponents. Stereotyping becomes useful as a vehicle for venting hostility and frustration. Stereotypes appear in a wide spectrum of contexts--they may be used as serious referents, or they may be used as the focal points for sarcasm and in-group humor. A good example was the sign raised aboard the Martin Karlsen upon its return from the ice in 1977: "Greenpeace Special: Flippers and Carcasses," (Photograph 3). The ship had been involved in a newsworthy escapade by Paul Watson, the Greenpeace leader who hand-cuffed himself to the loading winches. The banner displayed later in St. John's demonstrated the crew's attitude

toward the incident. As a mild form of ridicule, it suggested ineptitude on the part of those who attempted to interfere, and signalled victory for the sealers. However, this interpretation surfaced only in retrospect; at the time of the event, reaction was angry and indignant.

Rebuttal takes a variety of forms, but the message is always one of four, or any combination of these four, central themes: objection to interference by outsiders, efforts to discredit opponents, threats of retaliation, and bold assertions of the right of a group to continue established practices. Examples are given below:

Objection to interference

"...the campaign is a...hatchet job of almost historic proportions...the image of the Province is being smeared falsely and viciously." <sup>7</sup>

Discrediting opponents

"It is time the self-appointed guardians of the herds stopped their interference and went home. One wonders if the furor would be the same if seal pups were lobster-shaped and had cod faces." <sup>8</sup>

Retaliation

"I wouldn't think twice about giving them a bash on the side of the head..." <sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Evening Telegram, (February 25, 1977), p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Halifax Mail Star (March 18, 1977),

<sup>9</sup> Evening Telegram (March 3, 1976), p. 2.

### Assertion of rights

"We will not let anybody from anywhere do anything that would destroy our traditional values... we're fighting for our very survival in Newfoundland." <sup>10</sup>

The boundaries between collective and formal, and personal, spontaneous expressions of counter-protest are not absolute, and the paradigm is useful primarily for comparative purposes. Whereas the principal concern of this thesis is with three specific forms--verses, songs, and letters-to-the-editor, it is important to acknowledge other kinds of response. That such a variety of expressions were in circulation is attributed to the fact that the anti-seal hunt protest continued for more than a decade.

Since overt protest was concentrated in early Spring (February to April), the public and media were not required to devote continued attention to the issue and, therefore, the sensational aspects surrounding the hunt retained their ability to command attention. While counter-protest was not so periodic, it did intensify during peak periods of agitation by outsiders. A brief review of some of the formal expressions of counter-protest is provided here as a complement to the more personal and individualistic forms in Chapter Five.

### Visual Statements

A number of visual statements supporting sealing appeared as counter-protest expressions. The bumper-

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<sup>10</sup> Evening Telegram (March 15, 1977), p. 2.

sticker with the motto: "S.O.S. Save Our Swilers," is a notable example. Utilization of the familiar "S.O.S." plea for assistance, combined with the traditional Newfoundland term, "swiler," (sealer) is particularly interesting because there is the underlying implication that it is the sealers and not the harp seals which are endangered. The pronoun, "our," implicates the entire Province; whereas only a few hundred men engage in the ship-based hunt each year, the conflict is perceived as a threat to all Newfoundlanders.

In Corner Brook, the annual snow sculpture contest provided the impetus for Wayne Hartson to make a political statement: "Leave Our Newfoundland Seal Hunters Alone," (Photograph 4). The sculpture depicting a sealer and whitecoat pup was transformed from a familiar cultural figure into a symbolic counter-protest message.

In another example, the owner of a St. John's grocery used his front window to demonstrate support for sealers in March, 1978. "Bloody Decks and a Bumper Crop," is a traditional toast which was restored to public consciousness primarily through media repetition. Hugh Shea's sign was an extremely esoteric form of counter-protest, for the message is interpretable only to those familiar with the folk expression. (Photograph 5).

Other visual statements of counter-protest included buttons, comic strips, and cartoons. In Chapter Four,

several Joe Connolly cartoons are included to illustrate common rhetorical arguments.

#### Electronic Media

Radio played a vital role in stimulating counter-protest. By continuous news coverage, ranging from advance speculation about protest activities, to editorials, and on-the-spot reporting, the controversy was very much in the public domain. Martin Hurley, a disc jockey for the Corner Brook CF station, sponsored a "P.P.P." campaign during the first week of the whitecoat hunt in 1978. "Protesters Protesting Protesters" inspired some 4,000 calls from listeners in the Humber Valley and northern peninsula. Mr. Hurley summarized the majority opinion as, "most were disgusted our hunters had to put up with so much bull and so many uneducated people interfering in a man's right to make a living at something that does not destroy the elements or upset the balance of nature."<sup>11</sup> The P.P.P. had its own theme song, composed and recorded by Reg Watkins,<sup>12</sup> who was appointed honorary chairman of the group. The phrase, "uneducated people," occurs repeatedly in counter-protest expressions, yet is somewhat ironic considering the above-average educational level attained by most environmental activists. The reference.

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<sup>11</sup> Letter received from Martin Hurley (March 19, 1978).

<sup>12</sup> Reg Watkins, "200 Mile Limit Blues," SNOCAN SC138, 1978.

is intended to connote ignorance about the seal fishery and the Newfoundland economy, but it also serves to discredit those who make malicious and inflammatory charges about Newfoundlanders.

When the former sealer-turned-protester, Ray Elliott, returned to St. John's after appearing at European press conferences with Brian Davies, the open-line radio shows were incredibly abusive. A three-way phone hook-up was arranged so that callers could address either Elliott, the moderator, or both. Newfoundlanders were embittered and angry that one of their own could make false statements about sealing, and be quoted by the international press as an authority. Whereas most callers disputed Elliott's claim about skinning pups alive, the majority used the opportunity to express opinions about Elliott's character and his act of "betrayal." Typical of the remarks made on the morning of February 27, 1978, are as follows:

Caller: "You know you're just like Judas Iscariot, he sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, and you're selling Newfoundlanders for a trip over to Europe."

Caller: "You know...there should be someone there to tar you and feather you and burn ya... cause you're lower than an eel in a bucket of snot...if I was as low as you, I'd cut me throat...you're only sick, you're dirt, scum..."

Caller: "Traitor, I hope you choke on a nice juicy steak from a nice brown-eyed cow, or are you waiting for Spring, for a nice little lamb?"



'Caller: "Carl, I wish you'd get this man off the air; he's the devil himself..."<sup>13</sup>

In his insightful analysis of the open line format, Martin Lovelace concurs with Marshall McLuhan's description of the radio as a "kind of nervous information system."<sup>14</sup> Listeners perceive the moderators as possessing greater authority than they actually have, partially through personal performance styles, and partially because communication is immediate and direct. The ability to effectively articulate ideas limits the number of individuals who utilize the newspaper as a forum for expressing personal opinions, but there are no qualifications or special skills required to make a phone call. The open-line show "enfranchises members of a generally lower class," though no one is quite certain why the middle class declines to participate more fully. Lovelace summarizes and elaborates on a point made by Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton:

The notion of participatory democracy fostered by the medium is largely illusory; the real social function of these programs is to allow the venting of frustration at public bogey-figures but very little political action occurs.<sup>15</sup>

Many callers threatened Elliott with bodily harm in

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<sup>13</sup> VOCM Action Line, St. John's (February 27, 1978).

<sup>14</sup> Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media (New York: McGraw-Hill Paperback ed., 1965), p. 298.

<sup>15</sup> Martin Lovelace, "Gossip, Rumor & Personal Malice," unpublished paper (St. John's: Memorial University, 1978).

retaliation for his disloyalty, but the confrontations never materialized. Though it is impossible to measure Ray Elliott's role as an agent activating expressions of counter-protest in 1978, I believe his emergence and short-lived notoriety was instrumental in arousing sentiment among the general population. Government officials and the PRO dismissed him as a "crazy," yet there can be little doubt about Elliott's usefulness as a scapegoat.

Prior to the hunt, Greenpeace and Davies were distant, almost abstract threats. The public was too familiar with their arguments, and their advance publicity suggested the 1978 protest would be mild in comparison to previous years. Essentially, Newfoundlanders had become bored with the whole issue, but the Provincial government needed a demonstration of sustained public support as a mandate for their expensive pro-sealing campaign. While Elliott may have given Davies' cause extra vigor in Europe, his controversial stand also renewed interest at home. The open-line programs simply picked up on a news item, and the listening audience seized the opportunity to counter-attack. With the assistance of provocative comments by radio moderators, Elliott quickly became synonymous with "Judas Iscariot" in the public mind.

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from Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action," Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America, ed. Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1960), p. 464.

Dramatization

An account of the controversy would be incomplete without reference to several other events, notably the activities planned by the PRO, and the Mummers' play, "They Club Seals, Don't They?" The troupe toured across Canada during the Spring of 1978, and appeared in St. Anthony on the eve of the official opening of the seal hunt. The local auditorium was filled to capacity by local citizens and journalists, and reaction to the creative re-enactment of the controversy and its attendant issues was extremely favorable.

The Progressive Rights Organization hired a staff of writers to answer letters of inquiry, to solicit moral and financial support from service organizations and private business, and to plan activities which would focus positive attention on the seal hunt during the month of March, 1978. In St. John's, the sending-off ceremony--a tradition which had lapsed for thirty years--was attended by an estimated crowd of 4,000 people, (Photographs 6 & 7). Brief speeches by officials and sealing captains were followed by prayers offered by representatives of the clergy. The departing fleet was saluted by church bells and ships' horns in a loud and demonstrative display of support.

The spirit of public camaraderie carried well-over into the night of March 5th, as local pubs were jammed

with crowds of exuberant well-wishers. At the Rob Roy pub, "Home Brew," improvised an appropriate verse to their rendition of the "Drunken Sailor," song. In reply to the question, "What do you do with Brian Davies, what do you do with Brian Davies...", the musical answer was given: "Shave his balls with a rusty razor." The crowd shouted approval, and the group retained the verse for the following fortnight at regular club appearances.

In St. Anthony, PRO headquarters were open to the public (Photograph 8). A collection of work by the Newfoundland artist, David Blackwood, was displayed at the local Lions' Club, and a traditional crafts' exhibit were further efforts to demonstrate to protesters and visiting journalists that Newfoundlanders have a creative, aesthetic dimension which is often neglected.

#### Publications

The publication and presentation ceremony aboard the Lady Johnson II of Haulin' Rope and Gaff, a compilation of sealing songs and poetry, was another indication of this attitude. "Butchers can't be poets," was one observer's remark about the publisher's rationale for producing such an elaborately designed and high-quality book containing traditional songs and folk poetry.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Personal conversation with Dr. Kenneth S. Goldstein (March 17, 1978).

Two service organizations, the Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Institute and the St. John's Jaycees, adopted resolutions to support the seal hunt. Both accepted responsibility for providing facts to affiliate groups throughout Canada in an effort to reach people with alternative information.

(Resolved)...that we urge the Provincial Government to mount counter-advertising to show the true picture of the Hunt, to provide protection to the sealers by introducing a law prohibiting non-sealers from going to the ice, and that Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Institutes do all it can to pass on the true information of our Sealing Industry through Federated Women's Institutes of Canada (F.W.I.C.) and associated Country Women of the World, (A.C.W.W.). 17

The Jaycee publication included this message: "This document is dedicated to the truth and is being distributed by the St. John's Jaycee Unit to help combat, 'the big lie.'"<sup>18</sup> In contrast to the official seal hunt brochure printed by the Department of Fisheries and Environment,<sup>17</sup> the Jaycees' message was more defensive and provocative. Inclusion of a sketch depicting a seal with a pig face and the caption, "Let's be honest, it really does make a difference," (Appendix 3), is an obvious example of appeal through emotion rather than intellect.

Finally, a special issue of Decks Awash, a bi-monthly publication of the Memorial University Extension

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<sup>17</sup> Lewisporte Pilot (March 15, 1978), p.6.

<sup>18</sup> "Facts About the Seal Harvest," St. John's Jaycees, (1978), p. 2.

Service, was devoted to the seal hunt. The introduction states the editorial position:

...the controversy has gone far beyond the rational, scientific, and humane levels and entered into the realm of hysterical emotionalism. Unfortunately, those who are bearing the brunt of this mass hysteria are Newfoundlanders, and yet the hunt involves many more people who refuse to look in their own backyards. 19

Although circulated almost exclusively to Newfoundlanders, the magazine was an effort to objectively examine all aspects of the seal hunt. While the publication specifically addressed issues raised by critics, justification was argued via personal experience narratives. Rather than bluntly asserting the right of Newfoundlanders to pursue the hunt, a more subtle approach inferred the publication's position.



Photograph 3: Martin Karlsen, St. John's (March, 1977)

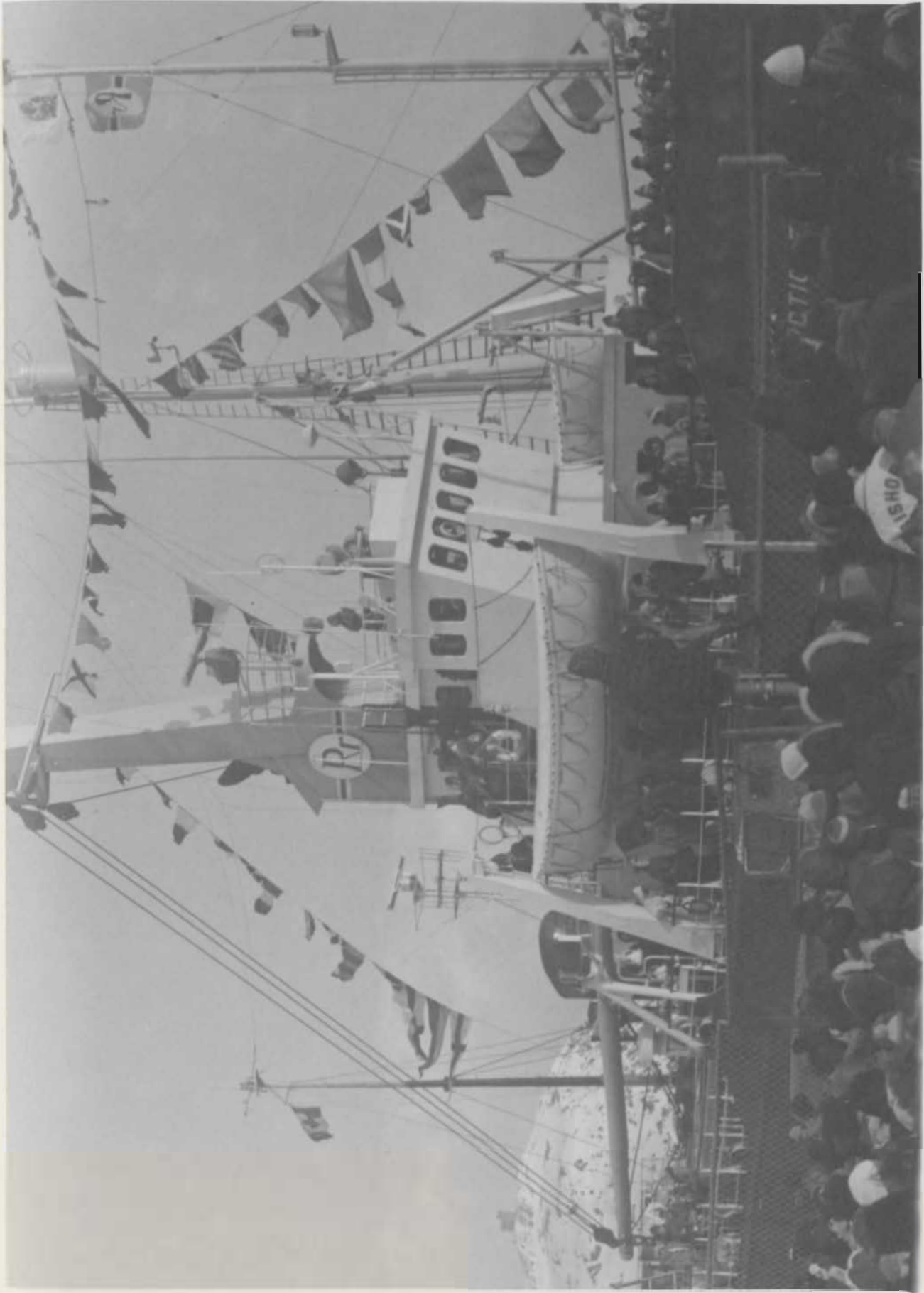


Photograph 4: Snow Sculpture, Corner Brook (March, 1978) (L. Rich)





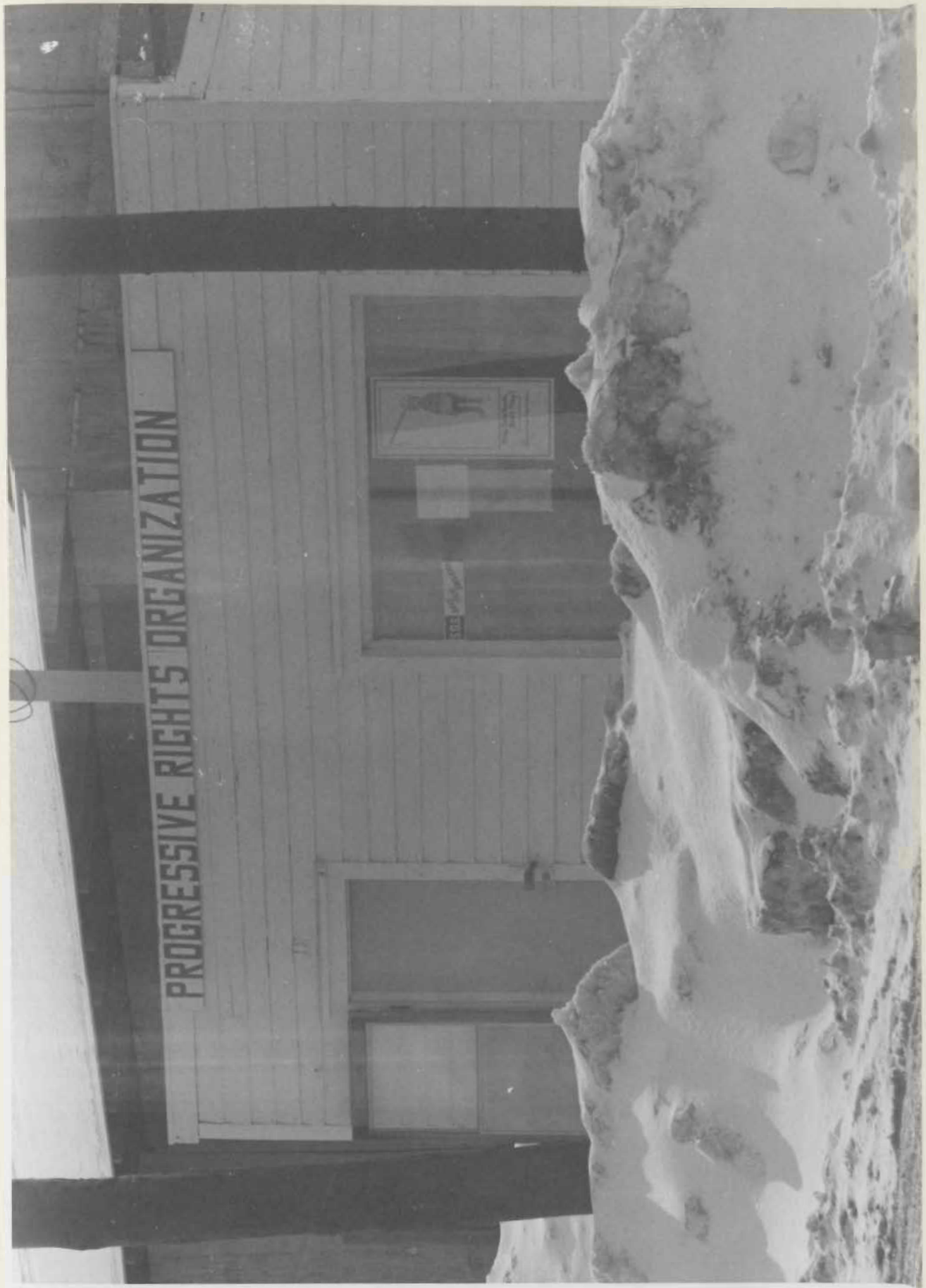
Photograph 5: Hugh Shea's store, St. John's (March, 1978)



Photograph 6: Sealers' Send-Off, St. John's (March 5, 1978)



Photograph 7: Ray Elliott and Constable, St. John's (March 5, 1978)



Photograph 8: Progressive Rights Organization, St. Anthony (1978)

#### IV. RHETORICAL STRATEGIES OF COUNTER-PROTEST

Rhetoric is "speech designed to persuade."<sup>1</sup>

As such, it implies an audience to whom an orator or writer addresses arguments with the intent to effect, alter, or confirm opinion. Whereas traditionally the orator has three "offices:" 1) to teach, inform, or instruct (docere); 2) to please (delectere); and 3) to move or bend (movere, fluctere),<sup>2</sup> the listening audience has no obligation to comply. Persuasion requires skillful, out-of-the-ordinary performance--be it argumentation via oral or through literary channels.

When disparate ideas compete for public attention and approval, the conflict is waged rhetorically. To quote Kenneth Burke, "the competitive and public ingredient in persuasion makes it particularly urgent that the rhetoric work at the level of opinion."<sup>3</sup> Opinion is rooted in perceived truth and discrepancies in perceived truths may escalate into overt controversy which, by nature, is an active rather than passive dispute. While the number of active participants in any controversy may vary, there is a conscious effort to maintain group solidarity and, at the same time, recruit

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Burke, Rhetoric of Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

new members. In all but violent, physical clashes, these objectives are most commonly achieved through rhetorical persuasion, since rhetoric is "the very weapon of controversy."<sup>4</sup>

The success of the anti-sealing campaign is credible testimony to the persuasive powers of language. The attack by Brian Davies, Greenpeace, and others, gained momentum by emphasis on these arguments: unregulated slaughter of pups by cruel methods, species' depletion, hunting to support a "trinket fur" industry, and the limited and uncertain economic return for three weeks' effort. By concentrating on a limited number of images--cute "baby" seals, and inhumane killing by sadistic hunters--the protesters created an indignant public in Europe and North America. When Newfoundlanders realized the protest was no longer an irritating amusement, and the future of the hunt was in jeopardy, angry voices of counter-protest were heard.

During the first decade of sealing opposition, the Newfoundland position was rarely carried off-island, yet there was continuous internal discussion. When the Provincial government entered the controversy in 1978, they, together with the Progressive Rights Organization, sought to correct popular misconceptions about the seal fishery by arguing with scientific data and statistics documenting

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Dixon, Rhetoric (London: Methuen & Co., 1971), p. 7.

economic need. In contrast, individuals were not compelled or constrained to respond with cool reason, and many Newfoundlanders were openly angry. Their expressions via public information channels were emotional replies to charges levied by intruders. Characteristically, opinions of counter-protest were either defensive responses to charges perceived as unjust or assertive and aggressive statements, largely intended to discredit the anti-hunt factions.

In his essay, "Literature as Equipment for Living," Kenneth Burke suggests that a broader classification scheme of literature is needed, that former critical categories must be transcended if we are to comprehend the sociological significance of literature. Burke argues for, "classifications, groupings, made on the basis of some strategic element common to the items grouped."<sup>5</sup> As previously noted, the theme of counter-protest has distinctive characteristics; notably it is argumentative, re-actionary, and emotional. Counter-protest expressions are not simply statements of opinion;

they are also attempts to rationalize a given set of conditions. Persuasion is directed towards critics; although the audience is generally internal, the intended audience is external, i.e, the Mainland, United States, etc.

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<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Burke, "Literature as Equipment for Living," Philosophy of Literary Form, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California, 1973), p. 261.

"Songs of persuasion," according to R. Serge Denisoff, function to achieve six primary goals:

1. The song attempts to solicit and arouse outside support and sympathy for a social or political movement.
2. The song reinforces the value structure of individuals who are active supporters of the social movement or ideology.
3. The song creates and promotes cohesion, solidarity, and high morale in an organization or movement supporting its world view.
4. The song is an attempt to recruit individuals for a specific social movement.
5. The song invokes solutions to real or imagined social phenomena in terms of action to achieve a desired goal.
6. The song points to some problem or discontent in the society, usually in emotional terms.<sup>6</sup>

It is, this final attribute, emotion laden terminology, which distinguishes expressions of counter-protest. Outrage, frustration, and pride are the emotional core of the searing controversy as waged spontaneously by individuals through public communication channels. Verses, letters-to-the-editor, and songs offer the opportunity to examine the emergent qualities of cultural rhetoric. Initially, anti-hunt agitation was confusing and incomprehensible but, through time, categories of accusations were identified and patterned counter-arguments were articulated.

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<sup>6</sup> R. Serge Denisoff, Sing A Song of Social Significance (Bowling Green: University Popular Press, 1972), pp. 2-3.



In order of citation frequency and strength, these may be classified as: 1) economic necessity; 2) tradition; 3) occupational hazard and hardship; 4) ecological responsibility; and 5) divine plan. While the government campaign sought to contradict the protesters' charges with authoritative evidence such as statistics and official reports, testimonials (eye-witness accounts and personal reminiscences) form the core of expressive counter-protest. Veteran sealers' reports about ice conditions and seal herds are regarded as highly reliable and, in fact, such testimony is likely to be more acceptable than a sheet of statistics prepared by professional biologists.

This preference for oral testimony is part of the seafarer's tradition--survival at sea requires careful observation, an ability to make decisions under adverse conditions, and reporting. Such skills are acquired through personal experience and listening to the experiences of fellow fishermen. It is not surprising, therefore, that even in argument the protesters and counter-protesters are in conflict. To the urbanite ecologists, the seal hunt issue was fundamentally a scientific and philosophical problem. In contrast, Newfoundlanders interpreted the dispute as a challenge to their traditional independence and livelihood. Richard Cashin, in a much applauded speech, made this observation:

The issue of the seal hunt is theological and we are experiencing a new paganism. We are substituting sentiment for faith and we worship an adorable little seal or some other fetish or symbol. In fact, Greenpeace, Brian Davies, and many supposedly intelligent and prominent people in the Western world have given the seal a soul.

The definition of protest (and counter-protest) implies a commitment to a position and, consequently, objection and opposition to threatening forces. To comprehend what is perceived as unjust or malicious provocation, one must examine the arguments most frequently offered in response to critics. Since each protest context generates particular sets of rhetorical counter-arguments, both content and the stylistic features of persuasive expression require study. As noted, Newfoundlanders focused on five central protest issues, and the essential points of each counter-argument are presented in the next section of this chapter.

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#### Ecological Destruction

The stability of the harp seal population has been debated by biologists, government officials, environmentalists, sealers, and the public. Unfortunately, since harp seals whelp on floating ice, it is impossible to determine the species' population with complete accuracy. Various measurement methods have produced

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Cashin, Evening Telegram (April 2, 1977), p. 6.

contradictory results and, therefore, opposing groups are at liberty to select data which corroborates their position.

In a rather heated televised interview with Dan MacDermott, a Greenpeace member of the 1978 Halifax harbor exploit, Rex Murphy elicited the following:

Murphy: One of your people said today at your press conference that you were obeying higher laws than the laws of the land. It suggests to me that you've got special rights or some special qualifications to interpret the higher laws, that you set yourselves above people...where is your connection with this higher set of laws than those the rest of us are supposed to live by?

MacDermott: We maintain that the most important thing for people on the face of the earth is to keep the earth a viable ecosystem. We maintain that wiping out a species, such as the harp seal, is an extreme circumstance which calls for extreme measures to make sure that stops. Many prominent scientists, not just Dr. David Lavigne, feel that it is ecologically insane to commercially exploit a species that is below its maximum sustainable yield.<sup>8</sup>

Interesting, the harp seal does not appear on any official endangered species list and, according to Fisheries Department biologist, Mac Mercer, the harp is the second most populous species of the planet's thirty-two types of seal. Even Dr. David Lavigne denied the alarmist position taken by protesters at a March, 1978, conference in St. John's.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> CBC-TV News (March 6, 1978).

<sup>9</sup> Evening Telegram (March 10, 1978), p. 4.

The two most familiar testimonials of counter-protest are: 1) assurances about the increasing size of the seal herds, and 2) the concomitant depletion of capelin stocks.

A ban on sealing, for example, could produce disastrous changes in the capelin stock, as capelin form a large part of the diet of the Harp seal. What's "good" for the seal could ruin the capelin stocks, which would in turn have a detrimental effect on stocks of another fish, such as cod, which feed upon capelin. It's like a chain on a highway.<sup>10</sup>

The St. Anthony Polaris News conducted an interview with a local fisherman and inquired about the relationship between seals and the abundance of cod:

...our cod fish is in worse danger than the seals...any fisherman can tell you they are watching the fishery going down from the past three years; if one million seals ate one pound of fish a day, multiply that by 365 and you've got 365 million. If you let those seals multiply you got one million this year, in two years' time, you'd have two million.<sup>11</sup>

What angers Newfoundlanders is the apparent assumption by protesters that they are unconcerned with natural laws. To quote Cliff Reardon again, "if they could point out to me that the seals are in danger, I'd be the first one to say yes, ban the hunt."<sup>12</sup> Thus, by 1978, the typical countering argument acknowledges the changing Greenpeace emphasis on ecosystems: "it is common sense

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<sup>10</sup> Decks Awash (February, 1978), p. 54.

<sup>11</sup> St. Anthony Polaris News (March 9, 1978), p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

that if we harvest a percentage of the prey (fish), then we must also harvest a percentage of the predator (seal) if we are to maintain nature's delicate balance.<sup>13</sup>

#### Divine Sanction

God put seals in the world like he did every other animal for the use of man. It is mentioned in the Good Book. Therefore killing them is no different from killing all the other animals we eat.<sup>14</sup>

Occasionally, divine ordinance is cited as justification for pursuit of seals. A more common practice was to invoke God's blessing for a safe voyage. Traditionally, seals were not killed on Sundays, and often church services were held aboard ship. As a demonstration of community support and thanksgiving, church bells were rung when ships departed and again upon their return.

I felt very proud for Newfoundlanders when I heard they were going to send their great heroes off to the 1978 hunt in prayers, prayers for a prosperous hunt and a safe return to "Home Sweet Home." I would have enjoyed this event because when I was young the church bells used to ring out to sealers returning home from the hunt. I can recall a wonderful aunt of mine lighting the lantern and placing it in a light tower near the shoreline to direct ships, low to the gunnels with seal pelts, a few miles off Bragg's Island.<sup>15</sup>

In 1977 and 1978, the clergy of six religious denominations gave official support to the sealers in two ways:

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<sup>13</sup> Facts About the Seal Harvest (St. John's, 1978),

p. 3.<sup>14</sup> Clerical Caller (January-March, 1978), p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Evening Telegram (April 1, 1978), p. 6.

by proclamation, and by participation in community meetings. As external protest intensified, Newfoundlanders sought justification from every available source. The involvement of the clergy is significant because, as the intermediaries between lay people and a higher power, their authority is considerable. While the motives of politicians are occasionally suspect, the clergy are believed to be immune from corruption.<sup>16</sup>

Religious differences were put aside in an ecumenical approach to the sealing controversy. At a public meeting in St. Anthony on March 14, 1977, religious leaders joined Provincial Fisheries Minister, Walter Carter, in defending the hunt before an audience of journalists, protesters, and local residents. The clergy pledged their wholehearted support behind the sealers, and reasoned their presence in this way:

The church is involved...to show by our presence and our words...our common concerns and our common mind an official position on the sealing industry as far as the church is concerned.<sup>16</sup>

They appeared again to conduct a short service of prayer at the sealers' send-off in St. John's on March 5, 1978. The fleet was blessed and divine guidance was publicly invoked. Inclusion of the hymn, "Eternal Father, Strong to Save," emphasized the hazards faced by sealers: "O hear us when we cry to Thee/ For those in peril on the sea."

The report that Franz Weber had requested Pope Paul

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<sup>16</sup> Public meeting, St. Anthony (March 14, 1977).

to take a position vis-a-vis the hunt: "Only an intervention by the Holy See could incite Canada to renounce its decision which dishonors humanity,"<sup>17</sup> infuriated many, and perhaps stimulated counter-protest expressions such as this:

In the meantime  
Onward Christian sealers  
Sailing to the Front.  
Don't let the protesters  
Interrupt the hunt. <sup>18</sup>

In an article in the Clerical Caller, the newsletter of the Newfoundland conference of the United Church of Canada, Reverend Arthur S. Butt reminisced about his own experience at the Front and concluded by admonishing those who sought to interfere: "May God forgive the protesters for the dispensation of their false propaganda and may He bless the Sealers who will prosecute the 1978 seal hunt and prosper the work of their hands."<sup>19</sup>

#### Occupational Hazard

These fishermen, in their efforts to provide the necessities of life for their families, are engaged in an occupation noted for its hardship and hazard. They will not take kindly to the efforts of misguided zealots who threaten to interfere with their lawful activities. <sup>20</sup>

Occupational hazard is an argument voiced by non-sealers, though references are frequently made to past

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<sup>17</sup> Evening Telegram (March 2, 1978), p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Evening Telegram (March 23, 1978), p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Clerical Caller, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> Evening Telegram (February 17, 1976), p. 6.

experiences of friends or relatives. With technological advances and a less-competitive attitude towards sealing, the degree of physical danger has decreased considerably. Although there are always uncertain perils at sea or on the ice, it is now chiefly the recollection of hardship and tragedy which survives in the folk memory.

Many of these brave men died at sea, not from poor health, but through great battles with the very unpredictable Atlantic ice fields. A neighbor once told me that he saw brave men grow weak and became foolish when they discovered that the strong winds and currents had separated them from their ship, some men wandered away and were never seen again, and others just gave up hope and froze to death. Some bodies were saved, but others were claimed by the sea; it has a demand too, for human life. 21

Tell me, Miss Bardot, do you recall at lamplight melting ice with your breath from the kitchen window? Yes, ten tiny faces peeping through, looking, waiting anxiously for a dad long overdue from the seal hunt, risking his life (for you) hopping from pan of ice to pan of ice in deathly chilling waters for barely enough money to buy molasses and tea. 22

John Scott, in his study of the functions of folklore at the seal fishery, suggests that:

...the esoteric picture of the hazards is certainly darker than that which is held by the sealers themselves. If the people at home wanted to see the hunt as fraught with perils, the sealers were in no hurry to correct them. 23

The risk of losing a chance to supplement their income was, to the sealers, more threatening than physical danger.

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21 Evening Telegram (April 1, 1978), p. 6.

22 Evening Telegram (March 25, 1977), p. 6.

23 John Scott, The Functions of Folklore in the Inter-



Economic Need

I wonder if Brian Davies or his co-workers ever heard a child cry for a slice of bread and molasses. Many of those families had a very limited amount of food in the home until their fathers returned from the ice floes. <sup>24</sup>

The economic value of the hunt is perhaps the most disputed issue of the entire controversy. While protesters argue that the number of Newfoundlanders who actually benefit financially from the hunt is limited (approximately 4,000), the Provincial government utilizes the same figure to demonstrate how the entire Atlantic economy is bolstered during an otherwise restricted season. <sup>25</sup>

Benefits for men who engage in the ship-based hunt fluctuate considerably from year to year, but landsmen frequently suggest that they derive as much as a third of their total income from sealing:

I start sealing about April 1 and I get about one-third of my income from that. Then, at the last of May to the middle of June, I start at the salmon fishery, from which I get another third of my income. After a month or so at that, I start at the cod fishery, which gives me the other third. All in all, the three lots combined give me my livelihood. To cut off that is going to hurt me. <sup>26</sup>

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relationships of the Newfoundland Seal Fishery and the Home Communities of the Sealers (St. John's: Memorial University) M.A. thesis, 1975, pp. 213-214.

<sup>24</sup> Decks Awash (February, 1978), p. 39.

<sup>25</sup> The Seal Hunt, Canadian Department of Fisheries and the Environment (FS 99-16/1977), p. 18.

<sup>26</sup> Decks Awash, p. 10.

In terms of popular opinion, statistics carry little weight. The fact that so many people believe the seal hunt is crucial to Province's economy is the relevant point. To quote a sealer about to depart for the ice in 1976: "...if they're out there trying to stop a man from making a living, there's going to be trouble."<sup>27</sup>

### Tradition

To the Newfoundland sealer, the seal hunt was part of his livelihood, an industry passed on to him by his father, his grandfather, and his great grandfather, and he sought to perpetuate it with dignity and pride.<sup>28</sup>

...it is part of our heritage, our soul and also our need to work for our bread instead of taking hand-outs.<sup>29</sup>

Seal hunt opponents dismiss the "tradition" argument, saying it is unfortunate but nonetheless ecologically necessary to abolish the hunt. They fail to recognize that sealing is not a single, isolated activity affecting only a small number of individuals. Even the official brochure makes this point: "...dollars and cents do not tell a full story. Sealing is an enterprise with an air of adventure, pursued in a hostile environment which tests the mettle of its participants. It is part of a cultural

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<sup>27</sup> Evening Telegram (March 3, 1976), p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Clerical Caller, p.5.

<sup>29</sup> Evening Telegram (February 1, 1977), p. 6.

heritage."<sup>30</sup>

Sealing was an adventure with an economic incentive. The opportunity for outport men to go to the ice at a time of the year when other activities were restricted was greatly anticipated. Traditionally, men who participated in the hunt enjoyed increased prestige in their home communities for several reasons: 1) often a man's credit-rating with the local merchant was increased;<sup>31</sup> 2) in an otherwise cashless economy, the hunt gave participants cash to buy items they otherwise couldn't afford;<sup>32</sup> and finally, 3) esoteric experiences were the source of entertainment (and instruction) among families and in larger social gatherings.

...it is the function of folklore to give men this ability to cope with conditions and dangers of the seal fishery. Also folklore functions to increase the rewards for participation in the hunt by allowing those people outside the occupation to hold an overly dramatic picture of the hazards of sealing.<sup>33</sup>

The second point is repeated in the familiar verse:

Harbour Grace is a pretty place  
And so is Peeley's Island  
Daddy's going to buy me a brand new dress  
When the boys come home from swilin'.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> "The Seal Hunt," p. 19.

<sup>31</sup> Scott, p. 233.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>34</sup> Helen Creighton, Maritime Folk Songs (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, Ltd., 1961), p. 180.

Sealing stories were integral features of community lore. Hardship, disasters, humorous incidents, and great sealing successes were subject to repetition, often inspiring the composition of songs and verses. The 1978 anthology, Haulin' Rope & Gaff, is testimony to the range of topics and attitudes towards the seal fishery. The oldest recorded song dates from 1833, but the fact that sealing songs are still being composed at the present time reflects an enduring fascination with the subject.

Family stories were also the source of pride and awe. Bella Hodge's is a good example:

One time, I remember my father went to Lance aux Meadows on dog team with five others. One man died and my father was found covered in snow with just his hands sticking up. One man reached home and told how the men were lost and a rescue team went for them. Then they brought my father home. He was frozen just like a chunk of ice. It took all night for my grandmother and the other women to bring him to. <sup>35</sup>

Such stories are the core of popular opinion about the fishery, yet there is a vague recognition that they may not be completely accurate. As one veteran sealer told an interviewer:

He (McKay) is very glad that he went and nowadays when he hears people talking about the Front and what goes on, or what they think goes on, he does not have to rely on what they are saying because he has been there himself and he knows for himself what happens at the Front. <sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Decks Awash (February, 1978), p. 13.

<sup>36</sup> William McKay, Interview (MUNELA 78-151).

In essence, the protesters are perceived as attacking a fundamental cultural activity which has legitimacy from its long history and many traditions. For this reason, the controversy is emotional and chauvinistic:

Those of us who are proud of our heritage should stand shoulder to shoulder and oppose any attempt by those who are ignorant of our way of life and wrest even the smallest portion of their heritage from our hands. <sup>37</sup>

### Sealers versus Protesters

The previous categories of argument are used by individuals to justify the hunt, but there are several other areas of dispute, notably, the image of sealers as cruel, barbaric men. Newfoundlanders, in response, try to discredit the protesters as ignorant and publicity-seeking come-from-aways. Roger Abrahams suggested that groups under severe stress will develop more highly esoteric forms of folklore than less-threatened or cohesive groups:

...folklore develops as an esoteric statement of groupness and reflects the common aims and practices of the group and their shared ideals. The amount of apartness felt by the group and the amount of anxiety under which they exist will be reflected in the amount of traditional expressions developed and the intensity of the life of such items. <sup>38</sup>

No where is this more evident than in the "controversy of character," or Newfoundlanders versus protesters.

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<sup>37</sup> Clerical Caller, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> Roger Abrahams, "Rhetoric of Everyday Life," Southern Folklore Quarterly 32 (1968), p. 59.

Ironically, the "attack" on sealers and ultimately on the moral character of all Newfoundlanders, was initiated by a native-born Newfoundlander. In 1960, an article appeared in Canadian Audubon written by Harold Horwood, an active conservationist. His description of the hunt as a "tragedy on the whelping ice" was laden with emotional imagery:

As dawn breaks over the frozen sea it reveals a scene of primitive barbarism: men wallowing in blood and fat, laying about them with their gaffs among the infant Harp seals that have been deserted by their panic-stricken mothers...<sup>39</sup>

Horwood refers to the traditional "Bloody Decks" toast as "symbolic of the barbarity with which the seal hunt is conducted."<sup>40</sup> The 1964 Artek film, shot in the Magdalen Islands and later broadcast on Canadian television, aroused considerable public indignation and paved the road for multiple "save the seal" campaigns.

...a crude Ceasarian performed on a pregnant mother seal hit on the head, the baby torn out of her body, the pup skinned without even stunning it, the mother animal regaining consciousness while all that happened--everywhere laughing, joking, swearing men in parkas and fur-trimmed overalls hitting baby seals and mother animals alike--hitting, kicking, slitting throats, tearing the furry skins off dead, half-dead, dying animals...a symphony of horror, a ghastly chorus of the damned which filled every corner of the sealing area--eery noise creating a fitting background of sound to the slow advance of red blood over the white expanse...<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Harold Horwood, "Tragedy on the Whelping Ice," Canadian Audubon, V. 22, No. 2 (1960), p. 37.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Lust, The Last Seal Pup (Montreal: Harvest House, 1967), pp. 44-45.

Sensational journalism, corresponding to the European and North American concern with conservation and the emerging environmental movement, made the seal hunt a particularly conspicuous target. The issue was moral dynamite; with a few pictures and an impassioned appeal on the seals' behalf, protesters were able to raise incredible sums of money with relatively little effort. As the controversy aged, inflammatory speeches discrediting sealers were gradually abandoned by Davies and Greenpeace, but Newfoundlanders would continue to respond to such labels as "savage barbarians." Newfoundland Premier, Frank Moores, opened his remarks to a Washington, D.C., news conference by stating:

No one likes to be the subject of innuendo and slander. No people like to be branded as sadistic insensitive, ruthless barbarians... (Even) your Congress has fallen prey to half truths and simplistic statements concocted by protest groups.<sup>42</sup>

Recognizing that blood and the slaughtering of animals is always an unpleasant sight, defenders of the hunt make frequent analogies to commercial abattoir operations:

I have never seen a seal killed in a barbarous manner--whether by gun or by a club. The scene of the kill is no more pleasant than that of the abattoirs I have visited, but it is just as humane.<sup>43</sup>

Tom Hughes, the Executive Vice-President of the Ontario Humane Society, spent many years studying different tech-

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<sup>42</sup> Kitchener-Waterloo (Ontario) Record (January 12, 1978), p. 32.

<sup>43</sup> Decks Awash (February, 1978), p. 34.

niques of animal slaughter and has made his position abundantly clear. While acknowledging the hunt as a "repulsive spectacle," with potential for abuse by inexperienced hunters, he defends the whitecoat hunt as humane and legitimate.

Hughes' participation in the pro-sealing campaign lent increased credibility since his own involvement began while still a member of the British Columbia S.P.C.A., and his initial purpose was to investigate the issue of cruelty. While on tour with the government's campaign in 1978, Hughes made the following assessment:

The greatest immorality in the seal hunting controversy has been the reckless, indiscriminate, deliberate campaign of racial discrimination and hatred which has been deliberately fostered against the people of Newfoundland and of Canada by groups of individuals whose primary aim is to raise funds, particularly in the United States and Europe. 44

Reaction by Newfoundlanders to charges of barbarism and cruelty vary considerably. Some are indignant and angry: "...your dastardly attempt to scuttle one of our industries, and few we have, is nothing short of sabotage." 45 A less-impassioned appeal, but nevertheless a firm denial, is offered by a sealer:

I have a great appreciation for nature. I respect nature and learn from it. I am amazed by it. For Brian Davies to call Newfoundlanders a bunch of maniacs, barbarians and savages is so wrong. There are no more sympathetic people on earth than Newfound-

44 Decks Awash (February, 1978), p. 38.

45 Weekend Magazine (May 13, 1978), p. 8.



landers. 'If I were to kill a seal and didn't kill it clean, then I would feel for it. The majority of fishermen I know feel that way. When you kill something, blood has got to flow. To the people who don't understand, it looks terrible. It makes you look like a savage, but it is the right thing to do when it is done right.<sup>46</sup>

A non-sealer was angered sufficiently to respond to the cover illustration of Weekend Magazine, March 11, 1978.

The impressionistic sketch of a person wearing a white fur coat smeared with blood, was circulated throughout Canada, and perpetuated the emotionalism of the sealing issue:

The morning of Saturday, March 11, began in an uneventful, almost boring manner. As is wont of a savage, and in accordance with my proscribed role as a Newfoundlander, I spent the early hours ravaging the countryside and torturing all the animals in sight. A trail of blood stretching back to the horizon, the extermination of several species of wildlife, and the gratification of a job well done were my just rewards. After kicking the cat 30 yards onto the nearest high-voltage wires, goring the dog with my cane, and tightening the vice on my wife's skull, I settled back to peruse that shining light in the void of journalism, Weekend Magazine...<sup>47</sup>

Alan Dundes points out: "...a group's image of itself and its images of other groups are reflected in its folklore repertoire," and "folklore not only acts as a unifying force in terms of one group's identity but also as a divisive force in terms of molding or confirming one group's attitudes toward another group."<sup>48</sup> The sealing controversy is particularly susceptible to the development

<sup>46</sup> Decks Awash (February, 1978), p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> Weekend Magazine (May 13, 1978), p. 8.

<sup>48</sup> Alan Dundes, The Study of Folklore (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 43-44.

and articulation of exoteric beliefs about both groups (sealers and protesters), because of the relative isolation of Newfoundland from the Mainland. Brian Davies spent a relatively short time in the Province and, when here, he was in St. Anthony at the extreme northern tip of the northern peninsula. Thus, there was minimal interaction between the two groups and the reporting was given a degree of license that otherwise might not occur.

While "professional" protesters refrained from making overtly insulting remarks about Newfoundlanders during their stay in St. Anthony, hate letters from distant places poured into the community and to the office of Fisheries Minister, Walter Carter. Some of these were printed in Decks Awash, and others were read on the CBC-TV program, Here and Now. A few examples suggest their incendiary nature:

Sir, ...you aren't even brave enough to kill anything but baby seals, newly born. Such savagery is unthinkable in a civilized society--but whoever said Newfoundland is a "civilized society." You even use clubs to do your savagery: shades of Neanderthal man! ...I thank God we live far away from you in a civilized land. With contempt for you and shame and embarrassment for all humanity, (J.C.; Ill.)

Dear R.P., ...I have heard that you are very tired of being labelled a murderer, but 'if the shoe fits, wear it!' There is no other title that so aptly fits you and your group of thugs. You obviously have extremely low intelligence... (S.W.)

P.C., ... You poor, poor man! Were you born deformed, lacking the most important quality of all, the one that is supposed to establish mankind as God's most blessed creation? Or were you deformed by others, say ugly, brutal people, perhaps your own parents?

The blind are not as handicapped as you are; those who are crippled can still see beauty and loveliness in the world around them. But you--you poor, poor man! Compared to you the death you harbor in your heart sinks into your groin to render you impotent. Better that such a child sink into eternal darkness than that it exist to pass along the heritage of bloodlust to another generation. (M.B., California)<sup>49</sup>

Newfoundlanders have been the subject of blason populaire traditions since Confederation in 1949, but the ideas expressed in such hate letters were intolerable. Retaliation was directed at Davies, Greenpeace, Weber, and occasionally, Brigitte Bardot for her activities, in 1977. Many counter-protesters did not (or could not) discriminate between the organizations or individuals but regarded them as compatriots in a full-scale conspiracy to denigrate Newfoundlanders for financial profit. (When Ray Elliott was queried about the Greenpeace organization, he dismissed them as a "small religious organization."<sup>50</sup>)

Many Newfoundlanders first thought the protest was a joke. Cecil Moulard, a survivor of the 1914 Newfoundland disaster, remarked: "...it was so foolish, coming down to paint the seals."<sup>51</sup> The conclusion, "...we are too late by years. The tarnishing of our good name has been done and still is continuing by this so-called conservationist,"<sup>52</sup> was finally voiced publicly in 1977, and counter-protest

<sup>49</sup> CBC-TV, Here and Now (February 23, 1978).

<sup>50</sup> Personal interview, Ray Elliott (February 28, 1978).

<sup>51</sup> Evening Telegram (March 31, 1976), p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Evening Telegram (March 3, 1977), p. 6.

expressions reflected a corresponding rigidity in attitude.

A sampling of comments reveal how the image of protesters was formally communicated:

Yes, there is a problem indeed to rid the world of such scum as there is roaming the earth, however, we can probably see that the P.S.P.G. (punk seal pup group) is fighting a losing battle.<sup>53</sup>

People who do not know the reality of a Newfoundland rural way of life such as movie stars, city slickers, Greenpeaceers should stay out of our affairs. A person whose hands have never been dirty or salted by the sea should keep their dainty hands out of it.<sup>54</sup>

Misinformed, cease senseless protesting, (Signal flag on the port side of the Norma & Gladys, St. John's harbor, March 5, 1978).<sup>55</sup>

Well, here is a little friendly advice for the little dandies from Chicago. Our sealers are not used to being shoved or pushed around especially when they are trying to make a dollar. They might panic and clobber one of them over the head with a greasy flipper, and the headlines of the Telegram would go something like this, "Greenpeace turns to red conflict as sealer clobbers airline stewardess with greasy, bloody flipper 25 miles southeast of the Offer, Wadhams."<sup>56</sup>

With the end of another seal hunt, Newfoundlanders can revert in the minds of their fellow Canadians from villainous despoilers of white-skinned innocence to the simple-minded rubes that, bless their hearts, refuse to abandon their moon-rock province for the civilized pleasures of Toronto.<sup>57</sup>

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53 Evening Telegram (March 17, 1978), p. 6.

54 Evening Telegram (March 22, 1977), p. 6.

55 Evening Telegram (March 6, 1978), p. 1.

56 Evening Telegram (February 26, 1976), p. 6.

57 Ottawa Citizen (March 31, 1977), p. 6.

Despite Moores' efforts, it looks like these bed-lammers from the protest groups will be back at the Front again this year, whelping new propaganda stories which should show us the error of our barbaric ways. Perhaps only when we die and go to that great ice pan in the sky will we get to hunt our seals in peace. <sup>58</sup>

The preceding expressions validate Joshua Fishman's hypotheses regarding stereotypes: "stereotypic content grows out of concern for the characteristics, goals, and methods of one's own group, as compared with those of another group." and,

Stereotypic content is also an indicator of the areas of interaction that are felt to exist (or which were once felt to exist) between two groups. If interaction is (or has been) such as to touch upon economic competition, show of strength, or non-tangible cultural elements, etc., then stereotypes will deal with shrewdness in business, stature and body type, education and sensitivity, etc. <sup>59</sup>

Certainly the perceived economic threat and assault on the morality of Newfoundlanders contributed to the evolution of reactionary stereotypes.

...Stereotypes, not unlike folk proverbs, represent a unique combination of insight, projection, rationalization, and out-and-out self-gratification. <sup>60</sup>

Since it was legally impossible to prohibit protestors from going to St. Anthony or to limit their activities in other spheres, frustration and hostility were vented via

<sup>58</sup> Evening Telegram (February 11, 1978), p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> Joshua Fishman, "An Examination of the Process and Function of Social Stereotyping," Journal of Social Psychology 43 (1956), p. 57.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

public communication channels. The reliance on stereotypes was part of an in-group coping strategy to deal with an otherwise intolerable situation.

Characteristically, stereotypes are concepts which are: 1) simple rather than complex or differentiated; 2) erroneous rather than accurate; 3) acquired through second-hand rather than through direct experience; and 4) resistant to modification by new experience.<sup>61</sup> There are multiple functions of stereotypes. They serve as "substitutes for observation"<sup>62</sup> and thought economy in a world where individuals are continuously bombarded by new information which has to be codified and acted upon. Whether stereotypes are inaccurate or whether they contain a "kernel of truth" has been argued in a variety of studies, but Fishman suggests it is more relevant to consider stereotyping as a process or an "abridgement of critical thinking in certain social contexts."

In stereotyping it almost seems as though the individual either judges not at all, or does so only via well-worn, dependable, swiftly traversable channels which require a bare minimum of defining, distinguishing, inducing, weighing of evidence, or any of the so-called higher mental processes.<sup>63</sup>

From a folkloristic viewpoint, stereotypes share certain similar functions with proverbs in that both "sum up a

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<sup>61</sup> John Harding, "Stereotypes," International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, ed. by David L. Sills (New York: Macmillan and the Free Press, 1968), p. 259.

<sup>62</sup> Fishman, p. 32.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 34-35.

situation, pass judgment, recommend a course of action, or serve as secular past precedents for present action."<sup>64</sup> As stylized response to recurrent situations, stereotypes are integral features of expressive counter-protest. They are aggressive assertions which define a group's identity vis-a-vis a threatening group. Persuasive appeals draw strength from arguing with the familiar, and stereotypes are precisely that--they are expressions of "everyday knowledge" which do not require explication to members of the group who employs them.

Gregory Gizelis, in his study of persuasive narratives, suggested:

One can find out from the degree of the topic's occurrence how vital it is for a particular individual or group. The higher rate of reoccurrence of a theme that occurs in a conversation, the greater redundancy, and therefore the less new information the addressees receive.<sup>65</sup>

The sealing controversy was essentially one-directional in that Newfoundlanders were on the defensive and had little opportunity to criticize opponents on their home ground. Stereotypes flourished because interaction with the protesters was limited, yet their regular appearance in early Spring was the subject of great public interest and suspicion since their avowed intent was disruption.

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<sup>64</sup> E. Ojo Arewa and Alan Dundes, "Proverbs and the Ethnography of Speaking Folklore," American Anthropologist V.66, No. 6, pt-2 (1964), p. 7.

<sup>65</sup> Gregory Gizelis, Narrative Rhetorical Devices of Persuasion (Athens: National Centre of Social Research, 1974) p. 27.

Newfoundlanders' anticipation of protest activities was a combination of curiosity, dread, and amusement. The ambivalence in attitude is reflected in many counter-protest items, but retaliation threats are particularly revealing expressions. Categories of retaliation threats roughly correspond to rhetorical expressive strategies: celebratory/condemning; sympathetic/reproachful; and facetious/satirical appeal (see following section for elaboration). An example of each type of threat follows:

Celebratory/condemning

We will fight a battle which will make the one we held in March, 1977, look like a Sunday School picnic.<sup>66</sup>

Sympathetic/reproachful

...not permit them any accomodations, no fuel for their copters, no assistance whatever and certainly no co-operation in any shape or form; only harass them without violence.<sup>67</sup>

Facetious/satirical

They should be arrested and for punishment made to eat overripe seal meat three times a day for 30 days. Then they should be dipped in a vat of permanent pink dye and shipped off home.<sup>68</sup>

While such threats reflect a broad spectrum of attitude towards the protesters, one must be careful not to assume that a sarcastic threat implies a light-hearted or amused view of the intruders. Often the most preposterous state-

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<sup>66</sup> Evening Telegram (April 30, 1977), p. 6.

<sup>67</sup> Evening Telegram (February 18, 1977), p. 6.

<sup>68</sup> Evening Telegram (February 3, 1976), p. 6.



ment is the product of prolonged frustration and hostility.

"I'd like to have them out here on the pans so I could drown 'em all," said Mercer Cullimore of Little Cataline, amid general laughter from his mates as he was interviewed on the ice. "They never saw a seal in their life except a tame one. If they seen a good dog hood they'd never stop running."<sup>69</sup>

Esoteric threats such as these discredit the protesters and imply that sealers are tougher and more experienced, therefore their cause will ultimately triumph. At the Viking Motel in March, 1977, Bill Short told Brian Davies:

"Mr. Davies, you are late for your appointment on the Front. If you were a sealer, you'd starve on the Front this morning."<sup>70</sup>

Other threats were plagiarized ideas from the protesters' plans: "If the protesters intend to dye the seal pups, why shouldn't the sealers, who are only trying to make an honest living, dye the protesters?"<sup>71</sup> In sum, retaliation threats--as other items of the counter-protest theme--are essentially defensive and emotional responses. They are spin-offs from irritating comments and activities, and their source of rhetorical strength lies with this transfer of hostility into verbal action.

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<sup>69</sup> Evening Telegram (March 23, 1977), p. 1.

<sup>70</sup> Evening Telegram (March 15, 1977), p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> Evening Telegram (October 1, 1977), p. 6.

## Rhetorical Strategies

Any time verbal discourse asserts or implies value or tries to lead us to infer it, it becomes rhetorical. As soon as we stand for or against, in some measure, we have exerted an influence, we have begun to draw readers or listeners away from something and to urge them towards something else, they are forced by our action to assent or dissent.<sup>72</sup>

Whereas familiarity with the preceding arguments is essential to any analysis of sealing counter-protest expressions, it must be remembered that they are components of a larger rhetorical strategy. It remains to be demonstrated how individuals structure their appeal to achieve their goal, which is justification and rationalization for the pursuance of the whitecoat hunt.

As noted, the outstanding marker of counter-protest is the highly emotional, reactionary message and delivery. Persuasion is effected by skillful manipulation of public sentiment and values; events and known "facts" are used as evidence to support a position.

Gizelis suggests that successful speakers are so because they convince their audience of sharing similar identities.

People pay attention to persuasive appeals, if the arguments presented sound reasonable to them. And, in order for them to sound reasonable, they must be in accord with the listener's ideology, cosmology, and world view.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> John H. Mackin, Classical Rhetoric for Modern Discourse (New York: The Free Press, 1969), p. 13.

<sup>73</sup> Gizelis, p. 91.

"Songs of persuasion," function to "communicate a specific sense of reality or view of the world."<sup>74</sup> In expressive genres, this is achieved by examples, i.e., arguments. When the message "reinforces the a priori belief system of the listener," (or reader), identification between the addressor and addressees is facilitated.<sup>75</sup>

Most frequently, sealing counter-protest utilizes a combination of arguments, though some receive more emphasis than others. While individuals may focus on the items they find most personally threatening or absurd, the fact that there are a limited number of categories of response suggests the possibility of constructing a composite world view.

Language, frequently vernacular language, confirms that protest is directed at promoting internal solidarity. Many words and phrases, i.e., "swilers," "bedlammers," "gaff," etc., are culturally specific and would be strange to the ears of outsiders. In an earlier examination of the seal fishery, Charles Sanger observed a crucial though unexplored point:

It is interesting to note that their use of such terrestrial terminology as "ice fields," "seal meadows," and "harvesting" in describing the ice-scape and sealing operation itself suggests that the sealers perceived the ice-floes to be a seaward extension of their terrestrial resource base.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Denisoff, p. 3.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>76</sup> Charles W. Sanger, Technological and Spatial Adaptation in the Newfoundland Seal Fishery During the Nine-

This is repeated and articulated by Richard Cashin during a televised interview on March 14, 1977: "...our raison d'etre...is to harvest the sea."<sup>77</sup> If one is familiar with the barren landscape of Newfoundland, and consider the oft-quoted phrase, "the Rock," to describe the island, it is understandable why the sea is viewed as a resource for cultivation and management. This is not to suggest mastery, but it does imply an appreciation of the inhabitants' historical and contemporary dependence on the sea. Through language, Newfoundland's isolation by the sea is phenomenologically reduced. Agricultural terms, such as "harvest" and a "bumper crop," invest a sense of human control over an otherwise capricious resource.

Respected human attributes are frequently revealed by verse and prose expressions. The suggestion that sealers are cruel is denied emphatically, and the reference to wives and family back at home serve to reinforce the argument of economic necessity. (The following examples are excerpts from verses included in Chapter V).

He's called the cruel sealer  
 He's one of a hardy race.  
 He's dressed in a coat of misery  
 And worry haunts his face.

But in his mind there's a picture  
 Of his pregnant wife on shore  
 Of his children, their empty stomachs waiting  
 And he hesitates no more. (Mrs. Jean Hiscock)

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teenth Century (St. John's: Memorial University), M.A. thesis, 1973, p. 230.

<sup>77</sup> CBC-TV, Here and Now (March 14, 1977).

The work ethic receives hearty approval, while the notion of accepting money from wealthy foreign entrepreneurs is treated with scorn. Swilers are portrayed as tough, God-fearing family men who accept responsibility for earning their livelihood despite occupational dangers and hardship: "...But the money earned by honest sweat/ is better than the dole." (MacIsaac).

But our Sealer, is a hard-working reaper,  
 And if there is blood on his hands,  
 It's part of his Livelihood, way of life,  
 He don't feel no guilt, nor shame,  
 As a few, big City Snobs, may claim,  
 To him its honest bread, forgetting strife.  
 (John White)

In contrast, and often more emphatically, the protesters are depicted as ignorant, interfering, hypocritical come-from-aways. Obvious wealth, compounded with an air of superior higher knowledge, make the protesters vulnerable to stereotyping: "...These pampered city slickers that a day's hard work would kill..." (Scammell).

Now we have "human babes" to feed,  
 In the Isle of Newfoundland  
 This might be hard for slickers  
 From outside to understand,  
 We have the elements to fight,  
 To earn the daily pay,  
 While parasites and hypocrites,  
 Take our good name away.  
 (Mary MacIsaac)

Newfoundlanders are proud of their image as being a friendly and hospitable people, and they resent one-sided publicity which ignores this valued trait:

Now we always have a welcome for anyone on earth  
 To come and spend some time with us to see just  
 what we're worth.

You'll find our doors are open and our friendship  
is for real.-  
We're not cruel the way some think just because  
we kill the seal.

(Rex Hemeon)

Laughter and the ability to find humor in even the most desolate places, is another aspect of island life. Cyril Poole explored the question of Newfoundland humor in a lecture entitled, "The Soul of the Newfoundlander." Poole suggested there is an intimate connection between humor and the "daily encounter with the sea."

"...to encounter the untameable sea is to meet some of the most primordial and inviolable laws of nature face to face, eye-ball to eye-ball. Now it has struck me that the incidents and stories that tap the deepest springs of Newfoundland humor are precisely those in which a living thing or person, preferably a Newfoundlander, breaks or bends those laws."<sup>78</sup>

Certain comic aspects of the protest are highlighted by Joe Connolly's book of cartoons, On the Front (see pp. 104-107), while references such as "...There'll be uncle Brian Davies and his hearty women crew." (Hemeon), imply an ability to find amusement even in the midst of combat. The confrontation on the ice-fields between sealers and protesters was transformed by several verse-makers from a serious encounter to an imaginary scene in which Newfoundlanders, with their long experience and expertise, out-manuever their opponents.

Going to the seal hunt on a winter's day,  
Watching all the Newfie boys joining in the fray  
Laughing at the Greenpeacers, and their cries of woe  
As armed with heavy spray guns they jump from floe  
to floe. (Alexandrine Mercer)

<sup>78</sup> Cyril Poole, Lecture (St. John's Historical Society, February 20, 1978).

In the following verse, Brian Davies is mocked for his inability to cope as cleverly on the ice as the sealers who he attempts to harass:

Now the sea is running mountains high  
 It made his stomach ache  
 he is not like Newfoundlanders  
 the sea he could not take.  
 (Thomas Goobie)

Survival despite isolation created a people noted for their independence and self-sufficiency. Newfoundlanders do not participate in a world community (except economically), and they value their unique identity. They are puzzled and gradually angered with unsolicited interference.

No one from here goes to your land  
 To interfere with you  
 We would be fined or put in jail  
 And be told just what to do.  
 (Michael Butler)

The countering arguments offered to expose hypocrisy on the part of protesters highlight special concerns which are common topics on open-line shows and in letters-to-the-editor columns.

- 1) Stay home and fight abortion  
 Injustices and crime  
 Try fighting hunger for the poor  
 Then for seals, no fighting time.  
 (Michael Butler)
- 2) We know they're things happening in this world that  
 are more cruel.  
 Because we are Newfies, don't mean we are fools.  
 How about the children that starve in other lands.  
 Let's think about the golden rule and help our  
 fellow man. (Rex Hemeon)

The protesters come from the United States, France, Great Britain, and Germany. There is a sense of irony and skepticism about the motives of "do-gooders" who seek to

save seals rather than attend to problems of their own:

- 1) A land where the white  
man rules the roost,  
Provided his "Mrs." lets  
him.  
Where the thought of a  
black breathing his air  
Is the one thing that really  
upsets him.  
(Minnie Haw Haw)
- 2) Your tears for seals do not impress  
Until French sins you do confess  
This offer should give you a thrill  
Abolish for a year the Frenchman's kill  
Of horses, geese, frogs and the snail...  
(John Crosbie)
- 3) ...Well, extinction is a word that is used so I've  
heard,  
As a way to stop that war in (Northern) Ireland.  
(Phoebe Bonnah)

Newfoundlanders were angered with both the federal and Provincial governments for their reluctance to take a firm stand against the protesters. Many felt the prevailing policy to ignore the protesters was politically naive, and the PRO was formed for precisely that reason.<sup>79</sup>

- 1) Where's our MP's? -Our Government? Why don't they  
intervene  
To prevent our white coats from awearin' o' the  
green. (Angus Lane)
- 2) Our governments must keep these types from  
Off the whelping ice,  
Or there'll be tragedies to tell--we're men,  
Not frightened mice;  
We merit more protection than a motion on  
the floor. (Art Scammell)

Robert Redfield attempted to define world view as a  
confrontation of that which is not the self and is outside

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<sup>79</sup> Evening Telegram (April 24, 1978), p. 6.



of one's self." Two questions immediately follow: "what is confronted," and, "what is the attitude man takes as to his relation to that which is confronted?"<sup>80</sup> The seal hunt, like other controversial disputes, is an issue which forces those who are threatened, to take a position. By so doing, people group themselves and formulate rationalizations for their choices. In this process, group values are articulated; inter-group differences which were once tolerated become the focal point for disagreement. Counter-protest expressions become valuable cultural indices because they make explicit what formerly was implicit.

Confrontation contexts are out-of-the-ordinary events. They are uncomfortable because normal patterns of activity are disturbed, and whenever routine or tradition is challenged by external forces, there is an obligation to defend such behavior. While there are a variety of ways to achieve this end, many Newfoundlanders, with their long (cultural) tradition of verse-making, have turned to composition as an expressive coping strategy.

Song and poetry belong to the sphere of play activity,<sup>81</sup> and as such, they are removed from other forms of ordinary discourse.

By effecting a removal from the real world into the stylized one, a tension is established through the involvement power of sympathetic identification with the enactment at the same time as a psychic

<sup>80</sup> Robert Redfield, "The Primitive World View," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 96 (1952), p. 32.

<sup>81</sup> Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens (Boston: Beacon Press,

distance is established through the creation of the stylized world and the mannered presentation. This allows for the cathartic response to the activity--the simultaneous identification and distancing. We can identify with the most anxious situations when they are in the controlled environment of the play world. <sup>82</sup>

Though play and performance may be recognized by their artifice, this does not imply a release from events in the real world. As Kenneth Burke suggests:

We think of poetry (or any self-consciously voiced expression) as the adopting of various strategies for the encompassing of situations. These strategies size up the situations, name their structure and outstanding ingredients, and name them in a way that contains an attitude toward them. <sup>83</sup>

Attitude, or point of view, is conveyed through tone (serious, satirical, sentimental, etc.) and emotion (anger, compassion, pride, etc.). With regard to the composer's intent, a thematic analysis of counter-protest is only partially instructive since items and arguments can be manipulated for amusement, as well as indictment. Collectively, three general attitudes towards the sealers, protesters, and the entire controversy are discernible: 1) celebratory and condemning; 2) sympathetic and reproachful; and 3) facetious and satirical.

Few of the verses or songs belong to an exclusive category; in fact, the author's view frequently shifts

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1955 ed.), p. 119.

<sup>82</sup> Roger Abrahams, "The Complex Relations of Simple Forms," Genre II (June, 1969), p. 115.

<sup>83</sup> Roger Abrahams, "Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore," Journal of American Folklore 81

within the work. Because these items are typically spontaneous, reflexive compositions, it is doubtful that this switching is deliberate, but it is indicative of the ambivalence which surrounds the issue. While it is impossible to classify verses into a strict attitudinal scheme, it is possible to establish a typology of strategy:

celebratory-----condemning  
 sympathetic-----reproachful  
 facetious-----satirical

There is a partial correspondence between these rhetorical strategies and the three classical forms defined by Aristotle. Speeches of praise and blame (epideictic rhetoric) were concerned with honor and dishonor; they argued in the present, using existing conditions as the source of their persuasive appeal. Deliberative rhetoric was advisory; through encouragement or dissuasion, a future course of action was recommended. Questions of advantage or injury were paramount. The third type, forensic or judicial rhetoric, argued from past precedent. Through accusation or defense, the primary concern was with justice and injustice.<sup>84</sup>

In sealing counter-protest, the verses which I have called celebratory/condemning are similar to the classical epideictic and forensic forms. They praise and blame,

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(1969), p. 145.

<sup>84</sup> Lane Cooper, The Rhetoric of Aristotle (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1932), pp. 17 - 18.

accuse and defend. Verse-makers invoke the past, relying on tradition to lend authority and legitimacy to the issue. Sealers are praised and accorded honor, while protesters are scorned as dishonorable zealots. The anti-hunt campaign is viewed as a terrible injustice to the people of Newfoundland. Protest from Britain is particularly antagonizing since Newfoundlanders have not forgotten the heavy losses suffered while fighting for Britain in the two world wars.

The intent of deliberative rhetoric, and its mode of persuasion, corresponds with verses on the sympathetic/reproach continuum. Emotions are mollified and the tone is solicitous rather than accusing. The audience is entreated to believe that, 1) sealing is justified (because), 2) sealers are only doing what they must to earn a living. Protesters are reproached for mis-directing their energies towards seals when there are many other urgent social evils which require attention. Advantages versus injury--to the economy of Newfoundland, the culture, and the environment--if the hunt is ended, are deliberated in verse format. Rationalization is paramount, but the persuasive means is evidence rather than vehement language.

Even in classical times, scholars had difficulty assigning rhetorical speeches to strict descriptive categories because oratorical style is highly personal and flexible. Cicero distinguished three styles, each of which serves the three "offices" of the orator: plain style for teaching or informing; tempered style

for pleasing, and grandiloquent style for moving.<sup>85</sup> Again, there are parallels between these classifications and the rhetorical styles of expressive counter-protest.

Celebratory/condemning verses are bold assertions of fact; the intent is to persuade (convince or move) through highly-charged, emotional language, which may be akin to the classical grandiloquent or ornate style. For teaching and instruction, the plain style argues deliberately. Sympathetic/reproachful verses intend to gain audience favor through reasoned (though not impassionate) argument. Name-calling and accusation is replaced by appeals based on tradition, economic need, and occupational hazard.

Although Aristotle stressed the eulogical functions of epideictic rhetoric, there are also play and display elements which appeal for "sheer delight." It lends itself to the written word because, "...its effects can be savoured, hence may profit by a closer, more sustained scrutiny."<sup>86</sup> Facetious/satirical verses are serious rhetorical appeals but their strategy is through humor. The pleasing office of oratory may be accomplished through mocking epideictic (praise or blame), and both facetious exaggeration and pointed ridicule through satire are common expressive modes in counter-protest verse.

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<sup>85</sup> Kenneth Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives, p. 73.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

Celebratory/Condemning

The most common rhetorical strategy is to praise the sealers and condemn the protesters. Sealers are depicted in idealized terms: "humble, hard-working," "Christian, salt of the earth," etc. In contrast, protesters are characterized as: "parasites," "Charlatans," "slickers," "gripes," "busy-bodies," etc. These songs reinforce group solidarity by making sharp distinctions between "we," and "they." The sealers represent all that is good and valued, while the protesters are destructive and malicious. There are occasional heroes--Cashin and Hughes--but more often the sealer is considered as an ordinary man who deserves praise for the very fact that he does not seek glory but attends to his own business. A lot of energy is devoted to reducing the stellar images of Bardot, Davies, Weber, and Greenpeace to symbols of treachery and evil.

Anger and disgust are the prevailing emotions in this type of verse. The tone is serious, defensive, and authoritative. The message is straightforward and declamatory. There are no indications that the author is willing to listen to other arguments; his mind is set, judgement has been passed, and the issue is closed.

Sympathetic/Reproachful

The second strategy is less forceful. It appeals to the audience by invoking images of the hard-working sealer who goes to the ice not for the adventure but out of

necessity.

If the fisherman must take a living from the sea  
 It's not for the cruelty, or the blood.  
 That a sealer kills a Seal pup.  
 He's as Human as others, pretend to be.  
 (John White).

References to pregnant wives and hungry children are contrasted with reproach for protesters who are wealthy enough to charter helicopters and hire starlets. Hypocrisy is emphasized, and rhetorical questions are asked of the self-proclaimed seal saviours: "So to you who do us wrong, Why come to where you don't belong?" (Pitts).

There is an attempt to inform about the circumstances of the hunt--protesters' accusations are answered with concern for rectifying the tarnished image of Newfoundlanders. There is an appeal for compassion: "Pride from people they do not know, Why do they come and treat us so?" (Pitts). Many of the verses are pleas for fairness, and examples of social evils and other injustices are included for their contrastive value: "They say we're awfully cruel because we kill the seal. I'd like to explain to them just how we Newfies feel." (Hemeon). References to starving or aborted human babies occasionally appear as a reproach for those who give the seal a higher priority:

And give to seals a human cult  
 A worship all their own,  
 A foolish sense of worship trait  
 With extreme overtone.

(Michael Butler)

Essentially, the tone of these verses is to suggest a reprimand or admonishment to those who seek to interfere.





which would indicate the audience is expected to recognize the terms. The playfulness of this would be lost on an outside reader unless he knew about the Paul Watson incident in 1977. Greenpeace charged that the crew of the Martin Karlsen were deliberately harassing the man, but other reports contradicted the story. The suggestion that a "Ragged Jacket" (seal) is worth more than the boy is a facetious remark, but it hits directly--the sealers need seals to earn cash for their efforts; when intruders interfere, valuable time is lost.

Finally, sarcasm can induce a wry laughter when it uncovers a hidden kernel of truth:

And then there are the Greenpeace crowd  
 You've heard of them I'm sure  
 You'd think they would reform the world  
 The way they rant and roar.

(Clayton Mencións)

As a measure of public attitude towards the sealing controversy, the lack of sustained humor in expressive genres is significant. Obviously, the issue is still too threatening, too vital, to be treated lightly. On the other hand, the media may be instrumental in reversing this attitude. Characterization of the March protest as the "annual circus" has become a popular expression, and it is possible that future verse-makers may adopt this metaphor.

The cartoons reproduced on the following pages are satirical jests at the protesters. The arguments used in

other expressive forms--verses, letters, and radio calls--are repeated, but their persuasive function may be secondary to esoteric amusement.



This cartoon depicting a scene at the ice is a satirical comment referring to the motives of protesters. It confirms a point made earlier, that the general public does not make clear distinctions between the various protest organizations. Greenpeace is a non-profit environmental corporation, while Brian Davies' International Fund for Animal Welfare is a taxable organization. While there is great dispute regarding

the financial benefits of protesting, the majority of Newfoundlanders believe there is money to be made in the effort.

The protectionists, parasitic in the sense they live off public funding, who never had to fight the elements for a living or were born into an upper class family, sees the seal as a pet, while in reality, he is a nightmare to the fisherman, destroying his chances to obtain the luxuries that other people obtain so readily.<sup>87</sup>



The negative stereotype of protesters, and Greenpeace

<sup>87</sup> Evening Telegram (February 19, 1976), p. 6.

in particular, is obvious in this cartoon. It is culturally esoteric in that Greenpeace enjoys a positive image in the United States and in many regions of Canada. Their appearance, described by Junior Abbott as "female people" (p. 20), referring to slim, long-haired protesters, offers a sharp contrast to the rugged image of sealers. The expensive apparel and gear worn by Greenpeace members is a source of ridicule, yet this may possibly be an unconscious expression of awe or envy.

The idea that protesters are ignorant about seals and Newfoundland life, despite articulate press releases arguing their authority, is a common theme: "Greenpeace have a very appropriate name as they are really green as far as knowledge of the seals are concerned."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Evening Telegram (February 19, 1976), p. 6.



Joe Connolly's interpretation of the common argument "...if the seal pup had a face like a pig, the Davies types would not be involved"<sup>89</sup> is amusing in an ironic sense. The image of the whitecoat seal, with its big brown eyes, has been exploited by protesters to elicit sympathy and donations, while other, less appealing species have been neglected by activists. The common reference to pig faces (see Appendix 3), is an interesting comparison, and may be related to the assertion that sealing is more humane than commercial abattoir operations which process pork and beef products. Another inference of this sketch is that

<sup>89</sup> Evening Telegram (March 15, 1977), p. 1.

sealers will eventually outwit the protesters with their guile and perserverance.



As argued, counter-protest expressions are reactionary rather than innovative. This cartoon demonstrates this point quite clearly, in that it documents an actual protest event. On March 18, 1978, Greenpeace President, Dr. Patrick Moore, was arrested for obstructing the seal hunt by sitting on a whitecoat in the effort to protect

it from sealers' clubs. Department of Fisheries officials warned Moore to move, but he refused and was charged for the offense.

(Cartoons reproduced with permission from Jespersen Printing, Ltd., On the Front, by Joe Connolly, 1978).

## V. VERSES AND VERSE-MAKERS

...class happens when some men, as a result of common experience (inherited or shared) feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs.<sup>1</sup>

Protest songs document strife between conflicting interest groups. While often socio-economic discrepancies divide the population, there are occasions when people relinquish their social class identities and fight for a common cause. The sealing controversy was one of these occasions; cultural consciousness transcended personal class divisions and expressions of counter-protest emanated from a feeling of unity based on shared geographic and historical experiences. Newfoundlanders, with their long-tradition of verse-making, almost naturally turned to song and poetry to communicate these strong, almost chauvinistic sentiments.

While definitions of protest folksongs are often debated, Ewan MacColl suggested another measure:

...does it--through its special form--increase our knowledge and understanding of the culture to which it belongs? Does it produce a simultaneous response of our emotions and intelligence?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E.P. Thomson, quoted in Roger Renwick, Individual Systems of Verse-Making Activity Among Working-Class People in an Industrial Region (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania PhD thesis, 1974), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ewan MacColl, The American Folk Scene, ed. David A. DeTurk and A. Poulin, Jr. (New York: Dell, 1967), p. 157.



In the Newfoundland context, the answer is apparently, "yes." While the songs may not survive in tradition, they do reveal valuable information about the public mood of a particularly critical decade. Several reasons for the failure of songs to endure have been offered: "...songs that were sung in anguish are likely to sound humiliating in time of security," and, "songs of protest also are usually spontaneous outbursts of resentment, composed without the careful artistry that is a requisite of songs that become traditional."<sup>3</sup> Regardless of the future of the hunt, the songs of counter-protest will probably be less-memorable than the songs of tribute composed in the nineteenth and early twentieth century when sealing was more competitive, hazardous, and romanticized.

Certain parallels may be drawn from Saskatchewan's history and song-making traditions. Dissent and discontent among farmers was channeled through organized growers' associations, but there were occasions when "short-lived but critical developments gave rise to a flurry of song-writing."<sup>4</sup> One of the most aggressive and explicit songs of protest, "Bennett Foiled," took the Prime Minister, the Honorable R.B. Bennett, to task. An inquiry after the 1935 Regina Riot concluded the song was not only an expression of protest, but was actually a defiant threat

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<sup>3</sup> John Greenway, "The Position of Songs of Protest in Folk Literature," The American Folk Scene, p. 114.

<sup>4</sup> T. G. Heath, "Protest Songs of Saskatchewan,"

to Bennett's personal safety. The song demonstrates:

...the bullying bravado into which protest can change when the conditions finally deteriorate beyond what is tolerable for the people who feel themselves to be the victims of injustice.<sup>5</sup>

Several contemporary sealing songs are similar in that they are intense and almost desperate pleas for justice-- overt and covert retaliation threats imply that sacred norms have been challenged.

Gizelis argues that: "folk aesthetics match and are, actually, intertwined with the way that members of a society perceive themselves and their surrounding world, and organize their experience."<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of the degree of his emotional involvement with a particular event and no matter how unique the event is, it is in some way familiar to him. For, he receives the incoming message and associates it with a pre-existing and dominating pattern of conceptualization which facilitates his composition during the performance.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, common experiential bonds permit communication between people who otherwise do not normally interact with one another. At the same time, it partially explains the lack of appreciation of localized, topical songs outside the milieu in which they are composed and performed. While newspaper verse may not survive critical literary assessment, it does find an appreciative audience within

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Saskatchewan History, 25 (Autumn, 1972), p. 87.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>6</sup> & <sup>7</sup> Gregory Gizelis, "Historical Event Into Song," Folklore 83 (1972), pp. 304 - 305.

its realm of circulation.

Maintenance of a specific, cultural folk aesthetic relies on three features: formulaic rendition, formulaic ideas, and formulas or formulaic expressions.<sup>8</sup> In other words, an historical event is recast not only by subjective, "personal conceptions of truth" but also by expressive expectations derived from previous interpretations of events. In addition, certain ideological associations and expressive dictions are culture-bound, and these are employed by the folk performer to elicit audience interest and sympathy.<sup>9</sup>

This theory makes it possible to examine the verses of sealing counter-protest collectively, despite vast differences in the authors' educational attainment, occupation, and place of residence. That verses written by John Crosbie (a Federal MP), Art Scammell, (a published poet), and those by amateur and occasionally anonymous, writers can be appreciated by the same audience is testimony to this phenomenon.

One of my initial hypotheses could not be validated through the data I received. I believed, as Roger Renwick postulated with regard to his work with working-class amateur poets in Yorkshire, that the degree of personal involvement with an event or situation, would affect the tone and emphasis of the composition. Only two contemporary poets were former sealers (Goobie and Menchions);

8 & 9 Ibid., pp. 308-9.

few had grandfathers, fathers, brothers, or other relatives who went to the ice, but most verse-makers knew people in their home communities who had been sealing, and recollections of their stories were still vivid. Several mentioned Cassie Brown's book, Death on the Ice (a powerful account of the 1914 Newfoundland disaster), as an influence to their attitudes. Although the book was not published until 1972, it has become a classic portrait of the hardships endured by sealers in former times. Perhaps its relatively recent appearance, contrasted with the protesters' attacks on sealers as cruel, barbaric men, was in part responsible for the wave of indignation that sought expression in the poetry of counter-protest.

Most of the verse-makers may be classified as amateur composers, although several have received recognition through previous publication or public performances. At one end of the amateur/performer continuum, is Mrs. Sheardown, who claims to have written only two poems in her life (see letter), and at the opposite end are what R. Serge Denisoff labels as the "folk entrepreneurs:" Pat Sulley, Ron MacEachern, Gary O'Driscoll, and Dayeton Larson. These men are folksong performers who also write some of their own material. They are self-conscious about the thematic content of their songs and they acknowledge that audience receptivity is one of their primary considerations in selection and performance of

certain songs. The lyrics of Larson and Sulley are the most personal and reflective of the entire collection, but I include them because they belong to this period of protest. As lyric protest, they still validate my contention that counter-protest is recognizable by its emotional, value-laden tone, rather than as a narrative catalogue of discontent.

To my knowledge, only two persons have written more than one counter-protest song or verse. Nish Collins, who writes the "Rhymes of the Times" column for the St. John's Daily News, uses current events and issues as the source for his rhyming commentaries. Michael Butler, a retired school teacher, writes poems for many occasions (see letter), and the sealing dispute inspired at least four complete poems and a stanza in another which appeared in the Evening Telegram. His approach is interesting in that he occasionally switches from narrative, descriptive poetry, ("The Sealers' Send-Off"), to more subjective, evaluative forms, ("The Greenpiece Intrusion").

The means by which I gained access to this material may also shed light on the poet's views of their status and ability as verse-makers. In February, 1978, I submitted letters to the two St. John's newspapers and eleven other provincial papers. The letters requested songs or poetry composed since 1957 which dealt with the sealing controversy. I deliberately did not make a statement as to my personal attitude about the hunt as I was curious to

see what kind of response I would get. I received four replies in the mail. Only one was unsigned; the paper was torn at the top, and I can only surmise there was some kind of message which, at the last minute, the author decided to omit. Fortunately, the March 9, 1978, issue of the St. Anthony Polaris News reprinted the poem and identified the author as Albert March of Stephenville, and I was able to contact him and thank him for sending me a copy of the poem. Mary MacIsaac performed her "Swilin' '77" at the LSPU Hall (St. John's) in November, 1977, during the "Good Entertainment" festival, and Ron MacEachern was a guest on Sylvia Tyson's "Touch the Earth" radio program. Ron sang both of his pro-sealer songs and explained to the listening audience how he came to support the hunt after carefully considering both sides of the issue. The other poems I discovered by chance, reading through back issues of newspapers, talking with the Mummers Troupe (I found Phoebe Bonnah's poem posted on their office wall), or contacts through friends (Tom Goobie's, "Brian Davies' Song," and Pat Sulley's, "Coffee on the Last Day").<sup>10</sup>

The fact that Michael Butler, Art Scammell, and Nish Collins did not respond to my public letter of inquiry, despite their regular newspaper reading habits, may reflect: 1) skepticism about the motives of such open

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<sup>10</sup> My thanks to Larry Malourin for referring me to Tom Goobie, and to Peter Narvaez for his reference to Pat Sulley.

requests, or, 2) their assumption that a person conducting such a study would obviously be aware of their efforts because of their recognized status as poets.<sup>11</sup> After

waiting for responses to my letter, I took the initiative and contacted the people whose verses I had collected on my own. Everyone was extremely co-operative, and permission was granted for me to include the songs and poetry.

Because many of the poets did not live in St. John's, I devised a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) to accompany a more personalized and explanatory covering letter. The questionnaire was designed to ascertain information about the author's previous writing experience, the degree of his involvement with the sealing issue, his view of the protesters and efforts to counter the attack, and finally, perception of his role as a composer/performer. Since several of the replies were quite detailed and explicit, I have reprinted them with the verses because they contribute to a better understanding of the counter-protest theme which I have been trying to describe.

I used two somewhat arbitrary criteria for arranging the poetry and songs of counter-protest: the first divides the verses according to the author's personal history of composition for social communication purposes, and the second involves the predominant rhetorical strategy chosen by the author to express his views. While there

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<sup>11</sup> I wish to thank Michael Taft for sharing this interpretation with me.

is inevitable overlap between each of these schemes, this arrangement serves most adequately to take into account the two distinguishing features of this material, i.e., the amateur/entrepreneurial continuum, and the contrasting tonal variations of positive/negative rhetoric.

The first section consists of verses and commentary by amateurs who do not have a long history of publication or performance. Some have written only one other item, while others have been composing for years. The unifying feature is that recognition of their talent has been restricted primarily to family and friends. This is by far the largest group, with twelve examples. These verses are then sub-divided by tone, which in effect, suggests the author's point of view. There are celebratory/condemning poems, and sympathetic/reproachful verses as well. While several contain facetious/satirical stanzas, not one author used this strategy consistently throughout the composition. Anonymous or unidentified compositions have been arranged within these classifications, since it may be assumed that the authors' reluctance or refusal to sign their names implies the message is more vital than any potential recognition.

The verses of Michael Butler, Mary MacIsaac, and Angus Lane comprise the second group. Each of these individuals have been active verse-makers for a number of years, and all have had the satisfaction of either publishing, performing, or recording for a public audience.



While their self-evaluations may differ, they have all known the satisfaction of unsolicited approval from sources beyond their immediate sphere of activity.

The third group are unlikely companions, and in some ways, I feel uncomfortable with this division. I have grouped Art Scammell, Nish Collins, and John Crosbie together on the basis of their public status and access to the media. While Nish Collins is the only one of the trio to earn his living from regular composition, Art Scammell's fame is intimately tied to his skill as a published writer, a skill he still employs in his retirement years. John Crosbie is an elected public official who describes his occasional verse-making as "doggeral" for the amusement of his family and friends. Yet his jest with Brigitte Bardot was read publicly in Parliament and later reprinted in the St. John's Daily News. He is appreciated by many for his loyalty to Newfoundland, and is one of the few consistent voices for the Province heard at the national level.

Ron MacEachern, Pat Sulley, Gary O'Driscoll, and Dayton Larson are performers as well as writers. Classified as "folk entrepreneurs" because their style is self-conscious and deliberate, this does not imply their expressions are not genuine, emotionally-inspired ideas. It is a classification term which follows this definition:

The 'integrated' folk entrepreneur may thus be defined as an individual who performs and

writes songs in the folk idiom as a means of achieving socially accepted aspirations, e.g., simply to make money or support socially accepted goals. <sup>12</sup>

GROUP 1. LOW-RECOGNITION AMATEUR POETS

Verses of celebration and condemnation

These are verses of praise and blame. Accusations are levied against protesters who are portrayed as unjust, hypocritical, and agents of destruction for self-gratification. In sharp contrast, the sealers are depicted as humble, hard-working men who go to the ice for the sake of their families' welfare. There are implicit social distinctions--the protesters are considered to be members of a wealthy elite class, men who have the means and leisure to engage in antics far from their own home communities. The sealer is the "common man," whose life is a continuous struggle to earn the basic necessities for survival.

The language is blunt, the sentiment defiant. The controversy is a battleground and there is no room for compromise.

(Untitled)

In the meantime  
Onward Christian sealers  
Sailing to the Front.  
Don't let the protesters  
Interrupt the hunt.

-M.S., Bell Island

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<sup>12</sup> R. Serge Denisoff, Sing a Song of Social Significance (Bowling Green: University Popular Press, 1972), p. 16.

The unidentified author of this short verse was reacting to the cover of the March 11, 1978 Weekend Magazine. In an angry letter of rebuttal, M.S. makes sharp distinctions between the morals of Newfoundland sealers and those of the protesters:

As for Brigitte Bardot protesting the seal hunt, it would be more to the point, if she would protest the slaughter before birth. Imagine the human children who will never see earth. Thousands of human lives are being taken away each day, mostly because people want to hide their sons. At least the seal hunters are not guilty of that. The seal hunt is once a year, not day after day (like the killing of human fetus)...<sup>13</sup>

(Mrs.) Jean Hiscock, Deer Lake

"The Seal Hunter"

He's called the cruel sealer  
He's one of a hardy race  
He's dressed in a coat of misery  
And worry haunts his face.

In his clammy hands he holds the club  
And raises it above his head.  
He sees the bloody ice around him  
And the little pups lying dead.

But in his mind there's a picture  
Of his pregnant wife on shore,  
Of his children, their empty stomachs waiting,  
And he hesitates no more.  
Danger lurks around him  
The shifting pans, the biting cold,  
But he thinks of the things he'll buy for his home  
When all the pelts are sold.

He thinks of the Greenpeace Foundation  
Eating their chicken and pork  
And he hates the way they condemn him  
For the sealmeat on his fork.

<sup>13</sup> Evening Telegram (March 23, 1978), p. 6.

May the devil take tormentors  
 To a place where it's nice and hot,  
 And let them repent for their own selfish acts  
 While they're roasting in his pot. 14

February 22, 1978

Dear Ms. Lamson,

I am flattered that you wish to use my poem, "The Seal Hunter," in your Master's thesis, and permission is, of course, granted. I was as surprised as anyone when my poem appeared in the Newfoundland Herald for the second time. I also felt quite good about it. I support the seal hunt, and as a mother of three children, as well as being a "drab" housewife, there was little else I could do to show my support.

Before I start to answer your questions, I'd like to give you an idea of how I felt and thought as I wrote my poem. I tried to put myself in the position of the sealer, to feel as he must feel about all the horrible things being said about him. I figured that he's a tough guy if he gets out to face the harsh Newfoundland winter on the ice floes. I could just see him there, his coat caked with snow, his face reddened, wrinkled by the sharp wind, his eyes unable to hide the worry. My father was a fisherman and I know he always worried that there wouldn't be enough fish to buy the things we needed, and I imagined the sealer must have similar feelings.

In the second verse his hands are clammy because he doesn't like what he has to do. He is aware of his surroundings. He does not need people like Brian Davies and the others to tell him what's going on. This is a necessary way of life for him, and nothing anyone can say or do is going to change the way he thinks or feels.

The whole while he is on the ice his family is never far from his mind. For them, he faces the unpleasantness, the danger; they are his source of strength and endurance.

He wants the protesters of the hunt to know that it is not all enjoyment being stranded on ice pans in freezing weather. He needs the money the pelts will bring, maybe to buy food, or maybe for a needed piece of furniture, or maybe even to put a roof over his family's head. Surely some of those who oppose the hunt eat chicken, pork, lobster, beef, and flesh from other living things. Why should they condemn him because he enjoys a meal of seal meat?

In his frustration and anger the sealer wishes they would all go to hell. In fact, he is almost certain they'll all end up there. He hopes the devil is ready to tor-

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<sup>14</sup> Mrs. Jean Hiscock, "The Seal Hunter," Newfoundland Herald TV Week (May 11, 1977, & January 11, 1978), pp. 52.

ture them. He'd like to watch them squirm as they regret their part in the seal hunt. As far as he's concerned, they're just doing it for personal recognition anyway. There are, after all, many ignorant people in the world, who have no idea what it's like to live in a small Newfoundland outpost where employment is scarce. Such people (and most of them are well-to-do) eagerly finance ego-trips for people like Paul Watson and the others who get to travel around the world in the limelight of the countries they visit. They (Greenpeace Foundation and the rest) are not so much concerned with saving the seals and whales and other species as they are with themselves, and with the publicity they get. Many of them get more publicity than the seals do, and that's the way they want it.

1) I have written other verses about many other subjects. I wrote my first verse when I was in the fifth grade. I enjoy writing about death, uncertainty, nature, and most especially, the sea, the beach, gulls, and fish. The Newfoundland Herald once published one of my poems, "Reason to Remember," a long time ago when it was in newspaper form. Aside from that, none of my verses were previously published.

2) I write for personal satisfaction. I work out my frustrations on paper. I do not deliberately set out to write a poem--such verse would be strained and unnatural. I write spontaneously. Perhaps something may bother me for weeks, then when I'm making a bed or doing the dishes I may have to grab a pen and write as fast as I can before I forget. If I have to spend more than ten or fifteen minutes on a poem, then it is strained, a kind of forced verse. "The Seal Hunter," was written during a commercial when the "Tommy Hunter" show was on TV. If I could just sit down and write a poem, I'd publish books of poetry, but this way, they have to come to me and I may go weeks without writing a poem. Some days I write three or four.

3) Few people know about my verse-making. I received most of my publicity in high school. I am (or was) more well-known around my home town (Heart's Delight). I like to write funny and nonsense poems for children. I read them to my children's friends. They ask for copies, and give me kisses.

Those who do know about my verse-making say things like, "I don't know how you do it." I remember reading one which is a particular favorite of mine to a friend, who showed little interest and later said, "Well, now that you've wrote it, what are you going to do with it?" In other words, what's the good of it?

4) I don't know anyone who has gone to the ice. My father would go out in a boat sometimes with another man, and if they were lucky, they'd shoot a seal or two. It was a source of meat and I used to love it before Brian Davies came along. I resent him because he made the seals

seem too human and I can no longer eat seal meat although I love it.

All I know about the seal hunt is from what I've seen or heard on T.V., or read in the papers. My husband tells me he once took part in the seal hunt as a landsman as a teen-ager. He once had the experience of being stranded on an ice pan with several men. They had to leave pelts behind and jump on slob ice to get to safety. There have been tales of worse experiences. I believe the men kill seals more for the necessity of the money than for the pleasure they get from killing.

5) I think I answered this question earlier in my letter. They do it mostly for themselves. I'd like to travel--perhaps I should join them and get some unsuspecting ignorant people to support me!

Through their protest they may well destroy the seal hunt. They are bringing the focus of the world on Newfoundlanders and painting a picture of a bunch of barbarians. I wouldn't be surprised if many people think we're cannibals.

6) Most of the protesters are sensationalists. Many have been taken in by others and know very little about what is really happening.

7) The seal hunt is very definitely threatened by the protesters.

8) I really don't know what Newfoundlanders should do to defend the hunt. Maybe we should form groups and visit other countries and point out to them that cruelties exist among them. Perhaps we should ask the ones who finance the hunt to use their funds for a much more needy cause, like trying to help people in poorer, developing countries. I wonder if we took pictures and films of poor starving and sick children and placed them around the pictures of baby seals would some people think twice about handing money over to these groups?

9) I think Newfoundlanders are sufficiently concerned about the future of the seal hunt, but it may be too late by now. Something should have been done when Brian Davies first started it all. We thought it was funny then.

10) My verses were intended as commentary about the existing situation. I also hoped to arouse the interest of others in the seal hunt. Most people are much too placid about things that really concern them.

11) The only other way I have expressed my concern about the protesters has been discussing it with family and friends.

Sincerely,  
Jean Hiscock

Jean Hiscock is an articulate woman who turns to poetry to express her sentiments. As explained in her

letter, her verses are spontaneous and reflexive rather than reflective. "The Seal Hunter" is a compassionate but idealized portrait of an ordinary sealer. The rhetoric belongs to the sympathetic category, but the final stanza is an angry, impassioned statement of condemnation: "May the devil take tormentors/ To a place where its nice and hot/ And let them repent for their own selfish acts/ While they're roasting in his pot."

The notion that sealers enjoy their work is denied by the imagery of the poem--the sealer looks at the "bloody ice" but, thinking of his family and the requirement to feed and clothe them, "he hesitates no more." Economic necessity and occupational hardship are central arguments, but protesters are scorned for their hypocrisy and greed.

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Phoebe Martin Bonnah, Happy Valley (Labrador)

"Protesters vs Sealers"

There's an awful fuss a-brewing on the ice  
should we kill the whitecoat seal and is it right  
Davies says we'll go to hell, if we don't stop the kill  
and Cashin says that's just where he can go.

So its protesters vs sealers in the fight  
and before they club each other to the ice  
the motives must be know--whose are false and whose  
profound--humble sealer, Greenpeace, or the seal.

Miss Bardot do you think those furs you've worn  
were weaved for you alone by gentle hands?  
and do you think that steak, upon your silver plate  
was picked off some plant that grows in France?

Brian Davies do you own leather shoes?  
Well that leather had a name, was born and died again  
and laid its slaughtered body at your feet.

Oh the people of Great Britain are disturbed  
 they think there'll be extinction of the herds  
 well, extinction is a word that is used, so I've heard  
 as a way to stop that war in (Northern) Ireland.

This world is full of walking contradictions  
 brave sealers of Newfoundland take heart  
 the world cannot condemn, you've not acted on a whim  
 if what you do is what you think is right. <sup>15</sup>

Phoebe Bonnah submitted the above to the Mummers  
 Troupe when she learned they were organizing a production  
 about the sealing controversy. Her initial letter stated,  
 "I would very much like to hear it used as a lyrical ballad.  
 However, I do not write or play music, so it's left to  
 your discretion. I am a Labradorian, who, as you might  
 gather, have strong feelings for and against the issue in  
 question."<sup>16</sup> She has been writing verses for twenty years  
 about "everything that interests me--none of which has been  
 published." Her brother, friends, and other relatives hunt  
 seals in Goose Bay.

As for the protesters, Phoebe believes, "their concern  
 for the seals, however misguided, is commendable. However,  
 if the main purpose of the organizations are for monetary  
 gain, than those organizations should be attacked and  
 disbanded. What the protesters accomplish is awareness.  
 Awareness to the fact that the seal must not be over-  
 harvested to the point of extinction."<sup>17</sup> She describes

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<sup>15</sup> Phoebe Martin Bonnah, poem posted in the Mummers  
 Troupe Office, (St. John's).

<sup>16</sup> & <sup>17</sup> Phoebe M. Bonnah, Letter to the Mummers (February,  
 1978), and Letter to C. Lamson (March 1, 1978).



her verse-making as personal commentary, written for self-satisfaction and for the enjoyment of her family.

"Protesters vs Sealers," is precisely titled, for Phoebe Bonnah does not rely on the traditional pro-sealing arguments. She is concerned about the image of Newfoundlander sealers who, in her opinion, have been unjustifiably maligned while self-righteous protesters are allowed to proceed unchallenged. Her strategy is a series of rhetorical questions, heavily weighted to elicit sympathy for the sealers. Bardot, Greenpeace, and Davies are accused of acting irresponsibly, but one Newfoundlander is singled out for his courage in standing up to the protesters. Richard Cashin met with agitators in St. Anthony in March, 1977, but his conclusion was simply that compromise was impossible.

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Albert J. March, Stephenville.

(Untitled)

Out of St. Anthony where the seals  
run free  
There are people out hunting for a  
baby,  
We must stop this slaughter out on  
the ice flow,  
These were the words of Miss Bridget  
Bardot.

But out on the ice flows there is  
more to see,  
For there is this guy they call  
Brian Davies,  
But out on the ice flow us Newfies do hunt,  
We're not like you people that's putting it blunt.

We're not like you people who kill  
 you're own kind,  
 We don't hunt for pleasure and this  
 you will find.  
 We're not like you people that's  
 putting it blunt,  
 So mind your own business and  
 stay out of the hunt.

For out on the ice flows us Newfies  
 will go,  
 Hunting for seals off the Labrador  
 flow.  
 Like our fathers before us to the  
 ice they did go.  
 No, you will never stop us,  
 Miss Bridget Bardot.

Oh you say what we're doing is not  
 very nice,  
 Then I say to you friend, read  
Death on the Ice,  
 For out off St. Anthony us Newfies  
 will go  
 To suffer the hard times of wind,  
 ice and snow. 18

Albert March was surprised to hear from me and to learn of the publication of his poem in the St. Anthony Polaris News. He said he submitted the poem about two months ago to the Progressive Rights Organization, who obviously forwarded it to the newspaper. The copy he sent me was slightly different from the published version, and he explained he did not have a copy of the original so he recalled the poem from memory.

The author, age twenty-eight, writes verses primarily for personal satisfaction, although he mentioned that several friends have asked for copies, indicating he does share some of his work. He has been composing verses

<sup>18</sup> St. Anthony Polaris News (March 9, 1978), p. 9.

for eight years about "history, stories I have heard and about people." Although he does not know anyone who had been to the ice, he referred to Death on the Ice as an influence: "I feel sorry for the seal hunters, for what they went through and for what they are going through now." The protesters are "people looking for attention," and although he doesn't believe the future of the seal hunt is threatened by the protesters, March does feel greater efforts should be made to counter the protest.<sup>19</sup>

The poem is another rhetorical effort to demonstrate the discrepancies between "them," (protesters) and "us," (sealers and Newfoundlanders). The author begins by trying to describe a scene objectively, but he quickly switches in the second stanza to an assertion of allegiance and condemnation: "We're not like you people that's putting it blunt." The key arguments are tradition and occupational hazard: "Like our fathers before us to the ice they did go," and "Then I say to you, friend, read Death on the Ice". The poem condemns protesters, but makes an effort to arouse sympathy for sealers who, "suffer the hard times of wind, ice, and snow."

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Madeline Pitts, Dunville (Placentia Bay)

"The Sealing Dispute"

The seal hunt dies in dear Newfoundland  
 Because of strangers who come and demand  
 What excuse can they make?  
 How many jobs will they take?

<sup>19</sup> Albert March, Letter (March 31, 1978).

Pride from people they do not know  
 Why do they come and treat us so?  
 Our livelihood we must work to make,  
 We did not mean any hearts to break.

A seal may be an animal they want to save,  
 But why concern, when human life they deprave?  
 May I be hold to say in jest  
 They have come not to do what is best.

Are we as heartless as they do claim?  
 No, we are working, fighting people,  
 We have struggled and are proud of our name  
 So to you who do us wrong  
 Why come to where you don't belong?<sup>20</sup>

Madeline Pitts Spurrell, age twenty, has been writing poetry since grade four. She always kept a diary, and hopes someday to write a novel. She has entered the Arts and Letters Competition, but never won an award. However, several of Madeline's verses have been printed in the Newfoundland Herald, and for these she has been paid a small honorarium.

Madeline feels angry and indignant at the protesters who are closing down an industry and "wrong-doing Newfoundlanders all over the world." Although none of her relatives were sealers, she sympathizes with them because of the dangers they must face; many have big families, and "there is no guarantee they will come back alive." She has spent a lot of time thinking about the protesters, and has devised her own taxonomy of motives: 1) the first group are truly concerned about the seal population; 2) the Brigitte Bardots are out for the pub-

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<sup>20</sup> Evening Telegram (March 21, 1977), p. 6.

licity it will bring to them--"they don't give a damn about the seal hunt;" and 3) Brian Davies and his likes who are out for profit. These people rely on the protest as a means to gain their own livelihood.

In a phone conversation, Madeline referred again to the issue of human abortion. Why there should be such an outcry for seals, and apathy towards human victims, is difficult for her to understand.<sup>21</sup>

"The Sealing Dispute," belongs to the second rhetorical category--sympathetic/reproachful verses. "Why do they come here and treat us so,?" is a question many Newfoundlanders asked among themselves, yet the answer was never completely resolved. Whereas most attributed financial profit as a protest motive, some, like Madeline Pitts, tried to give protesters credit for their conservation concerns: "A seal may be an animal they want to save/ But why concern when human life they deprave?" Again, the familiar closing sentiment is defiant and aggressive: "So to you who do us wrong/Why come to where you don't belong?"

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Minnie Haw-Haw (Anonymous)

"Freedom, Flags and the Seals"

Here's to the band of  
liberty  
Where people are so  
humane

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<sup>21</sup> Madeline Pitts Spurrell, Phone Conversation (March 5, 1978).

That the killing of seals for  
a living,

Is a big, loud, crying  
shame!

• A land where the white  
man rules the roost,  
Provided his "Mrs." lets  
him.

Where the thought of a  
black breathing his air,  
Is the one thing that really  
upsets him.

They're fanatic about their  
freedom and flag,

If you meet them they'll  
kiss and embrace;

While the poor old Newfies,  
who live off their seals;

• Are a barbarous, murderous  
race.

That land where ladies are  
screaming for laws

To murder their unborn  
child;

Yet the thought of another  
race slaughtering seals,

It's driving those kind people  
wild.

Send that dame Lambert up  
here to Newfie,

Nothing would give me  
more glee,

Than to put her on an  
icepan,

And push her out to sea.

And if she wants humanity,

What could be more

humane

Than to pick up old Brian  
Davies,

And give him more of the  
same? 22

This is the earliest expression of counter-protest I  
recovered during my investigation. Oblique references to  
social problems in the United States are used in recrim-  
ination to charges of cruelty by Newfoundlanders. There

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22 Evening Telegram (March 24, 1971), p. 6.

is a serious, sobered kind of irony used to counter slanderous accusations, but the final verses are more whimsical, implying a view that the protest could be dispelled by a single act of defiance.

"Freedom, Flags and the Seals," is a facetious effort to discredit protesters who dare accuse Newfoundlanders of slaughtering "baby" seals while ignoring atrocities in their own country. It is an esoteric verse in the sense that the threat of pushing "that dame Lambert," and setting her adrift on an icepan would only be appropriate to regions where respect for ice and the sea is an indisputable cultural fact.

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(Mrs.) Alexandrine Mercer, Topsail

"Whitecoats, Greencaps"

Going to the seal hunt on a winter's day  
Watching all the whitecoats innocent at play,  
Just thinking of a green cross fills one with dismay,  
What will all the pups do when mama turns away?

Come sealer lads from Twillingate a few nights ago  
And told the-TV audience what they wished to know,  
While over on the mainland, they listened goggle-eyed,  
As they heard how many seal hearts our boys bring back  
with pride.

Going to the seal hunt on a winter's day,  
Watching all the Newfie boys joining in the fray,  
Laughing at all the Greenpeacers, and their cries of woe,  
As armed with heavy spray guns they jump from floe to floe.

Coming home from the seal hunt on a winter's day  
Watching all the baby seals and mothers as they play  
Watching all the green caps floating in the bay,  
Our witty Newfoundlanders, I know they saved the day.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Evening Telegram (March 13, 1976), p. 6.

Mrs. Mercer's poem was written in 1976, the year Greenpeace threatened to dye the seal pups green in an effort to render the pelts useless to the fur industry. The reference to seal hearts acknowledges a custom which the protesters exploited for shock value and yet to Newfoundlanders is not an act of barbarity. The concluding phrases suggest that Newfoundlanders will outwit the Greenpeace lads who have no experience at the ice and therefore are destined to fail.

The letter which Mrs. Mercer sent in reply to my inquiry about her verse-making and attitudes toward the controversy is reprinted in part.

March 3, 1978

Dear Cynthia,

I am gratified that you wish to use my poem, "Whitecoats, Greencaps," in your Master's thesis...about the poem, well, at the time, I must admit it was written in some part frivolously. However, I feel much more strongly about the anti-sealing campaign now, and if I were to write a poem or article again, I would express my feelings and beliefs in no uncertain terms, with little or no frivolity.

For the most part, I see humor in most things which triggers off the desire to write poetry. I have written poems, short stories and articles since my early teens (which is quite some time ago). I have always been a dreamer, preferring painting, writing, and playing the violin to housework and any other down-to-earth occupations.

Why do I compose verses? Mostly for self-gratification and for friends; but if I feel strongly enough about a subject I submit it for publication in the hope it will do some good.

I know no one who has been to the ice. I am not a Newfoundlander (Scottish by birth)--but I married a Newfoundlander and think Newfoundland is a wonderful island.

Regarding Brian Davies and the hangers-on, I have a few ideas of my own as to their motives. It could be the beautiful soulful brown eyes of the whitecoats that



touched their hearts--it could be entirely for publicity, or it could be a money-making racket. I have no way of knowing whether any or all of my theories may be right. I do feel that no one should interfere with the Newfoundlanders' means of a livelihood, and I am shocked and disgusted with the way this infamy has grown out of all proportion.

I know it has been said many times before but I'll say it again, we have murderers in our midst all the time, when butchers slaughter calves and lambs simply to provide us with legs of veal and lamb chops. Are people so gullible that they lap all this nonsense up?

I am not an intellectual and I can't see myself belonging to a group of protesters, or being recognized by the government for anything I might write. It is my feeling that Newfoundlanders should resort to more drastic measures. I feel they are not paying enough heed to the far-reaching results of the campaign. It will be too late after the seal hunt is banned or if all the markets are closed to us--both in pelts and seal meat.

"Going to the ice" is a way of life for the hunters. They bring to it the proud tradition handed down through the years...<sup>24</sup>

"Whitecoats, Greencaps," is the most whimsical of all the counter-protest expressions in this collection, but it reflects Mrs. Mercer's attitude in 1976, which still was partially disbelieving in terms of potential threat. By 1978, as explained in her letter, she no longer viewed the protest as humorous in the least part.

In terms of rhetorical arguments, the poem stresses a competitive theme, with protesters and Newfoundlanders trying to outwit one another with clever schemes. There is a facetious reference to Mainland audiences who listen "google-eyed," to sealing reports, and an emergent sense of pride rather than apology about esoteric traditions is evident.

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<sup>24</sup> Alexandrine Mercer, Letter (March 3, 1978).

C.M., Eastport"Go Home and Live in Greenpeace"

Breathes there a man with head so dense  
 Who never said, I should have had better sense  
 To improve on nature I should never try  
 To spray the whitecoats with green dye.

These mother seals before going down,  
 Circle their puppies round and round  
 When they get their milk to flow  
 They saturated the encircled snow.

When they have their pups, so white,  
 They're supplied with milk for the day and night  
 While they are hunting away from below  
 They come and spray the pups with snow.

On their mission they onward go  
 While the puppies eat milk, dye, and snow.  
 You can be sure beyond a doubt  
 These pups are green inside and out.

When the mother seals come back this time  
 Their little puppies they can nowhere find,  
 The scent of dye is to them unknown,  
 And they their little pups disown.

For days and days they hunt around,  
 But nowhere can their pups be found  
 That spraying spree would sure suffice  
 To lose their puppies on the ice.

If on their mission they only should  
 Come in contact with an old dog hood  
 Their baseball bats would be of no avail  
 They'd need their gaffs that seal to kill.

Read, mark and learn the best device,  
 To kill the seals out on the ice;  
 One slap with gaff that seal lies dead,  
 Slap, slap and bang those clubs they made.

And one spray of dye would sure suffice,  
 To starve those puppies on the ice;  
 But thanks to God they were forced to cease  
 And go back home and live in Greenpeace.<sup>25</sup>

This is another 1976 poem, with the same reference to the Greenpeace threat to dye the seal pups. A popular though unsubstantiated belief circulated during this period that mother seals would abandon their young if they were sprayed. It is an interesting reversal of blame for the fate of the young whitecoats--while protesters condemned the cruel methods used by the sealers, Newfoundlanders countered with the argument that abandonment was far more brutal, with death a certainty, and no gain for either side.

"Go Home and Live in Greenpeace," is one of the few poems in which seals figure prominently. Rhetorically sympathetic towards the pups, I had to re-read the composition several times before ascertaining whether it belonged to the category of counter-protest. It is interesting because it implies that seals rightfully belong to sealers, while protesters are seen as opponents who will harm the seals. The final verses are unmistakably defiant, relying on divine sanction as authority for pursuance of the hunt.

The image of the savage old dog hood appears here as it does in several other counter-protest expressions, implying that physical dangers are still very real. There is also a bitter comment on the prohibition of the gaff. The gaff was banned and replaced by the hakapik as the only legal implement for slaughtering seals. Sealers traditionally relied on the gaff for their own personal

safety as much as using it as a weapon, and many a seasoned sealer voiced concern about the new regulations.

The concluding lines, "But thanks to God they were forced to cease/And go back home and live in Greenpeace," was somewhat premature since the protesters returned to St. Anthony in 1977 and 1978 with little to discourage or obstruct their mission.

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Clayton Menchions, Botwood

(Untitled Song)

Have you heard of Brian Davies?  
He's the leader of a gang  
Who came down here to Newfie  
For to try to put a bann  
On the killing of the whitecoats  
And anything that moves  
Just to make himself more famous  
When they tell it in the news.

The way he tries to tell it,  
Is that all of us are bad,  
Just because we like to follow  
The ways our fathers had--  
To go to hunt the Whitecoats  
As they pass along the coast  
To make a few more dollars  
And have flipper pie to boast.

And then there are the Greenpeace crowd  
You've heard of them I'm sure  
You'd think they would reform the world  
The way they rant and roar  
But they're the same as Davies  
And all that Mainland gang  
We're better off without them  
In good old Newfoundland.

The seals that come along our coast  
Are there for the use of man  
To help him with his food and clothes  
It must have been God's plan  
But those people from the Mainland  
Are all so rich and wise

They have no use for sealskins  
Or even flipper pies.

When Smallwood made Canadians  
of us in forty-nine  
He didn't think our way of life  
Would be put out of line.  
He thought that we would hunt and fish  
And do just as we please  
But the way it looks to some of us  
We'll soon do none of these.

So here's to all the Newfies  
Who stand up for all their rights  
May they never heed Brian Davies  
Nor any of his likes  
And when it comes to Greenpeace  
Or even Swisse Franz  
May they learn to live and let alone  
Like we do in Newfoundland. 26

According to the author, this song was made up for a concert in Botwood in April, 1976. It was designed to be sung to the same tune as the popular, "Kelligrew's Soiree."

Clayton Mencións, age fifty-five, has been writing songs about "anything that appeals to me" for thirty-five years. He was born in Bay Roberts, Conception Bay, and he has been a clergyman and a school teacher. His work has never been published; yet he is anxious to share his verse, as demonstrated by his taking the initiative and responding to my newspaper inquiry for sealing songs and poetry.

Clayton, his father and his brother were sealers, though he did not specify whether they were landsmen or went aboard the sealing ships to the Front. His comment was brief but precise: "it was a difficult undertaking"

and a hard way to make a few dollars." The protesters, in Clayton's view, are out for their own personal gain: "they can get a fat and easy living by their protesting."<sup>27</sup>

One of the familiar arguments--divine sanction--appears in the fourth verse as justification for the hunt. Bitterness towards those who would interfere with an independent people is the closing sentiment: "May they learn to live and let alone/ Like we do in Newfoundland." The reference to Confederation suggests that hostility towards Mainlanders is long-standing, and nostalgia for a way of life gone by is evident: "He (Smallwood) thought that we would hunt and fish/ And do just as we please..." In a sense, this song is a call for action: "So here's to all the Newfies/ Whos stand up for their rights."

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Tom Goobie, Old Perlican

"The Brian Davies Song"

You have heard of Brian Davies  
The foolish little man  
he left his foolish country  
and came to Newfoundland

He thought to stop the seal hunt  
but it was more than he could do  
to frighten off the captains  
and their hearty crew.

He landed in St. Anthony  
the nearest to the patch  
of pretty little whitecoats  
where sealers use their bats

He brought with him helicopters  
to make an early start  
but the landmen all surrounded him  
and his plane it would not start.

The mounties broke the picket line  
and let poor Davies free  
he went to follow all his gang  
out on the northern sea.

But when he got out on the patch  
the ice was all broke up  
he never had the nerve enough  
to stop the killing of the pups.

The sea was running mountains high  
it made his stomach ache  
he is not like Newfoundlanders  
the sea he could not take.

He brought down Mr. Webers  
like wise Miss Bardot  
to hold a puppy in her arms  
and make a great big show.

They soon got fed up with their game  
their gas was getting short  
and with a very short said tale  
back home they made a start.

Farewell to Mr. Davies  
Mr. Weber and Bardot  
and don't come back here any more  
and land upon our shore. 28

Mr. Tom Goobie is seventy-one years old, and is now retired from his life-long career as a fisherman. He spent three springs at the ice, and his father was also a sealer. Like Clayton Menchions, his remarks about sealing were brief but precise: "...it was hard work and a means of income," suggesting not the adventure but the reality of the occupation.

This song was written in the spring of 1977 after

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28 Tom Goobie, Letter (April, n.d., 1978).

Tom had seen a televised news program which reported Brian Davies' activities in St. Anthony. He was angry and considered the protesters: "stupid to try to stop Newfoundlanders from killing seals." The closing of the seal fishery, replaced by an imitation fur industry, is Tom's interpretation of the protesters' objectives for interference. He believes the hunt may be threatened-- "more ships and more Newfies" should become involved.

"The Brian Davies Song" is the only counter-protest expression I collected which is also a narrative documenting local events. While Michael Butler's "Sealers' Send-Off" (see Group 3) is a narrative poem, it lacks the emotional, argumentative qualities which characterize counter-protest verses. As a localized, event-specific song, it is highly esoteric to Newfoundlanders. In 1977, Brian Davies and his helicopters were picketed at the Viking Motel outside the community of St. Anthony. The demonstrators were angered when a force of nearly one hundred RCMP officers were sent to protect Davies--the crowd was forced to disperse and Davies was able to fly to the Front.

Franz Weber and Brigitte Bardot were accessories to the protest in that their 1977 appearance was interpreted by many as a publicity gimmick. A photo, portraying Bardot protectively holding a whitecoat pup, was printed in Paris Match and other international papers.<sup>29</sup> The

<sup>29</sup> Paris Match (April 1, 1977), cover and pp. 64-69.



print served the protesters' cause but angered Newfoundlanders because it was a fraud. The "pup" was the work of a taxidermist and, as many have argued, it would be impossible to hold a live pup because of its sharp talons.

Tom Goobie concludes his song with a vehement remark: "Don't come back here any more/ And land upon our shore." His view is obviously one of disgust--that "foolish" Brian Davies should dare to interfere with a time-honored activity pursued by "hearty" crews should not be taken lightly.

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#### Verses of Sympathy and Reproach

Statements of appeal which solicit sympathy and compassion rather than demanding it through praise or blame indicate the author has chosen a rhetorical strategy which is deliberative rather than imperative. Questions of advantage versus injury--i.e., do the protesters gain at the sealers' expense, the social implications of elevating a seal pup to a position of higher regard than human life, etc., are among the principal concerns of these verse-makers.

There is an effort to inform the protesters why the seal hunt is necessary, and to explain the conditions under which the sealers must struggle to survive. The underlying tone suggests a willingness to abide by

natural laws, and the protesters are beseeched to do the same.

The emphasis is on dialogue, as though the authors believe they might be able to dissuade the protesters if they argue convincingly. Name-calling is reduced, and more energy is devoted to portraying Newfoundlanders as a kindly, unassuming, yet dedicated people. Unfortunately, the audience (s) to whom the poems are directed will probably never see these appeals, but they do function to heighten a cultural identity and enhance group solidarity.

Elizabeth Sheardown, White Horse (Yukon)

"The Seal Hunt"

Come all you people I'd like you to hear  
The story of the seal hunt which took place this year  
Now Brian Davies that publicity-seeking man  
Called come on gang, let's go to Newfoundland.  
You know the seal hunt is about to begin  
If we don't make trouble it would be a sin  
Those Newfoundlanders are an awful bunch  
Why they even eat seal flippers for lunch!

The people of St. Anthony cried what's going on  
Who are these people who have come along  
They've said to the world, let's put the Newfies down  
Because for the ice fields they're outward bound.

Now the life of a sealer is difficult at best.  
But for hundreds of years have withstood the test  
Of the stormy March winds and the treacherous ice floe  
That have foundered their ships and sent them below.

The Greenpeace objects is to the killing of seals  
Saying this slaughter is useless out on the fields  
But their wallets are fat, their stomachs are full  
While in their choppers they fly out of the cold.

They don't need this income like the sealers do  
 And never fed their children with seal flipper stew  
 Davies quit his job when the money rolled in  
 From contributors whose sympathies he managed to win.

Now a song writer I know I never will be  
 But I would be happy if I could help one person see  
 That the Newfoundland Sealers aren't cruel men  
 Only do what they must for a living to win.<sup>30</sup>

The letter I received from Mrs. Ben Sheardown is worth reproducing almost in its entirety because it reveals how an individual may be motivated towards expressive behavior. In this case, an event which stirred her emotions was the primary impetus for writing-- the radio and her friends were instrumental in the act of submitting the verse as a social expression of counter-protest.

March 23, 1978

Dear Miss Lamson,

Thank you for your very kind letter, it was a very pleasant surprise...I have written one other poem and that was on the occasion of the birth of my daughter. I wrote it for a friend with whom I had a wager.

Last Spring (1977), the CBC Morning Side program (Harry Brown and Maxine Cook) sponsored a song contest in which the contestants could write about anything they wished. I had no desire to enter. However, while waiting to pick up my son from school one day, I heard a news broadcast concerning the Seal Hunt, Brian Davies, Greenpeace, etc. It made me so angry I decided to write down what I was feeling. I completed all the verses the same day with the exception of the last one. I completed it the following day, but I was never completely satisfied with it. I read it to several of my friends and they encouraged me to enter the contest. I felt there was little chance of winning because of the controversial subject, but I thought there was a possibility that it might be aired as each week several entries were read on the program. I felt it was a great opportunity to express my views coast to coast. However, it was never read and I was disappointed when I received a form letter

<sup>30</sup> Port aux Basques Gulf News (February 1, 1978), p. 15.

thanking me for my entry. I then made copies and sent them to my friends and family in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. In addition, I called a friend who was a Greenpeace member and read her my poem. She protested strongly, saying her group did not object to the Newfoundland sealers but rather the foreign sealers, and that their only interest was protecting the seal from extinction. I pointed out that the Newfoundlanders were bearing the brunt of their objections. Even though she felt my views were not accurate, she agreed that if I was correct than the literature she was receiving from Greenpeace was misleading.

My mother (Mrs. Alva Keeping) was pleased with the poem and said she would place it in the paper this Spring. As I had heard nothing else I thought it had gone unnoticed. Although I had the satisfaction of compliments from my friends, I was disappointed as I had hoped someone would want to include my poem as material in an anti-Greenpeace protest.

I feel that Greenpeace and Brian Davies launched a successful protest in Newfoundland simply because of the very nature of the Newfoundland people (warm and unassuming). Brian Davies had very little opposition in the beginning because Newfoundlanders on the whole do not concern themselves with the outside world. I believe that they truly believed that no one would brand them as a brutal and cruel people. However, by the time they realized that this was actually happening, Greenpeace and Brian Davies had already made enormous strides (unchallenged) in convincing the world that this was the case. I feel that the Seal Hunt is threatened by Greenpeace because they play on the emotions of people like my friend who now regard the baby seal as something akin to the human baby. These same people would balk at the idea of eating baby beef if they were constantly reminded that calves were being killed daily to fill their dinner plate. Most of the Greenpeace supporters are not truly aware of the vital part that the hunt plays in the lives of some Newfoundlanders.

I was very pleased and encouraged when this spring a large number of people turned out to see the sealers off in the old traditional way. The campaign by the local government hopefully will have some good effect. I think films concentrating on individual sealers and their families and way of life would force outsiders to look at the other side of the story.

When I wrote my poem I had hoped to make people think about the seal hunt as a way of life that has been going on for hundreds of years and to point out that the Newfoundland sealers were neither cruel nor unfeeling men who killed for greed or sport, but rather a breed of brave, hard-working, proud men and that to condemn them without any real thought as to their situation was to show one's

own ignorance and lack of compassion for one's own fellow beings.

To my knowledge, no member of my family has ever been involved in the hunt, although we always had seal meat. I have watched and talked with many young sealers who were heading for the sealing ships (many for the first time), and although I was young myself at the time, I remember the admiration I had for these young men because most of them I felt were really frightened at the prospect of heading out to the fields but never was there any mention made of this by them, only that they had families who were depending upon the income they would receive at the end of the hunt. It is indeed a crime that these same men should now be labelled as cruel and heartless men...

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Sheardown

Mrs. Sheardown's letter confirms and elaborates on the sentiments expressed in her poem. With regard to the sealing protest, she is obviously committed to the effort of restoring a good reputation to the Newfoundland people. From the act of composition, her entry into the contest "for the opportunity to express my views from coast to coast," the phone call to the Greenpeace supporter, and sending copies of her poem to friends and family in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, it is apparent that: 1) she perceives the issue as vital, and 2) she feels she may have some ability to convey her message effectively. The objective is stated clearly at the end of her poem:

"But I would be happy if I could help one person see/ That the Newfoundland sealers aren't cruel men/ Only do what they must for a living to win." This is repeated in the letter when she admits, "...I had hoped that someone would want to include my poem as material in an anti-Greenpeace protest."

The poem itself draws on the familiar arguments: tradition, economic necessity, and occupational hardship. The tone of the poem changes as it progresses; the first two stanzas are rather light and playful, but the transition is made through sobering images of "stormy March winds," "treacherous ice floes," and "foundered ships." Reproach is her tone for protesters who earn easy money through playing on the emotions of uncritical supporters.

Although Mrs. Sheardown claims no illusions about her role as a verse-maker: "Now a song writer I know I never will be," some of her comments suggest disappointment at the lack of recognition or appreciation from anyone outside her immediate friendship circle. The statement about the liability of a controversial topic for the radio poetry contest may have been her own personal way of preparing herself for disappointment.

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Rex Hemeon, Botwood

It's over for another year and the Greenpeace have gone home.  
 But I bet they'll be back next year cause they won't leave us alone.  
 There'll be uncle Brian Davies and his hearty women crew  
 It's just too bad these people can't find better things to do.

They say we're awfully cruel because we kill the seal,  
 I'd like to explain to them just how we Newfies feel.  
 We don't travel to the ice flows because it's so much fun,  
 It's just another way to have to increase our income.

My father, his father and grandfather before  
 They travelled to the ice flows for a hundred years or more.  
 They left their families home for months to go and hunt

the seal  
 You have to be a Newfie to understand just how we feel.

We know they're things that happen in this world that are  
 more cruel,  
 Because we are Newfies don't mean we are fools.  
 How about the children that starve in other lands,  
 Let's think about the golden rule and help our fellow man.

We realize the need to conserve the things God gave to us  
 We got so many years without demonstration and such fuss,  
 The whole world's guilty of neglect, yes every single man,  
 So let your conscience be your guide before you judge our  
 Newfoundland.

Now we always have a welcome for anyone on earth  
 To come and spend some time with us and see just what  
 we're worth.  
 You'll find our doors are open and our friendship is for  
 real.  
 We're not cruel the way some think just because we kill  
 the seal. 31

I was unable to locate Rex Hemeon, so it is impossible  
 to provide any biographical data or information about  
 previous verse-making experience. The poem is a 1976  
 counter-protest expression, as inferred through the  
 reference to Brian Davies' "heartv women crew." Davies  
 hired a number of airline stewardesses to go to the ice  
 as part of his protest tactics, an act which both amused  
 and irritated Newfoundlanders. The women were expected  
 to enhance his chances of media coverage and possibly  
 disturb the sealers who might hesitate to club a white-  
 coat if a woman protested on its behalf.

Economic necessity and tradition are the arguments  
 offered to justify the hunt, while rationalization occurs  
 with such references as: "We realize the need to conserve

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<sup>31</sup> Newfoundland Herald (April 14, 1976), p. 22.

the things God gave us/ We got so many years without demonstration and such fuss." The cruelty issue is denied and there is a deliberate effort to restore a positive image to Newfoundlanders: "Because we are Newfoundlanders don't mean we are fools " and "You'll find our doors are open and our friendship is for real."

Through gentle reproach, the protesters are requested to be more reasonable and devote their energies to more demanding problems: "How about the children that starve in other lands/ Let's think about the golden rule and help our fellow man."

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John White, Cormack

"The Greenpeace Mission"

In the year Nineteen Hundred Seventy Five  
The planning of the Greenpeace hit our news,  
The killing of the Seal, they would appeal,  
They were coming to Newfoundland  
To take a determined stand,  
And with green dye, mark all the baby seals.

The Greenpeace group did reach St. Anthony,  
Where the Northern Ice flows, and the Seals pass by,  
Not coaxed along, by no Pacific tide,  
They were met there, by men of Iron will,  
In the season of the Kill,  
And the misinformed soon recognized their pride.

Cause its just another crop,  
That fishermen must harvest,  
If the Fisherman must take a living from the sea,  
Its not for the cruelty, or the blood,  
That a Sealer kills a Seal Pup,  
He's as Human, as others, pretend to be.

Its a Harvest that gives Dollars  
To many Fishermen of this Island,  
Their fathers, and Forefathers before that,



Its true, our Island has paid the price,  
 For the Seal-Hunt at the Ice,  
 In hardship, and loss of Life,  
 Our Island has paid for every ounce of fat.

But our Sealer, is a hard-working reaper,  
 And if there is blood on his hands,  
 Its part of his Livelihood, way of life,  
 He don't feel no guilt, nor shame,  
 As a few, big City Snobs, may claim,  
 To Him its honest bread, forgetting strife.

All our Experts say the Seal Fishery,  
 Is in no danger, becoming Extinct,  
 So what was the Greenpeace commotion, all about.  
 Was it for Publicity that they were gunning,  
 To keep the Donations incoming,  
 That gives easy Bread and Butter, no doubt.

Yet there are so many Avenues,  
 Where the blood of life flows free,  
 And the good Angels of Mercy never tread,  
 As the slaughtering is hidden,  
 And Intruders are forbidden,  
 To Photograph and show the world, the Dead.

Yet they show the bloody movies,  
 Of the Newfoundland Seal Hunt,  
 And try to tell the World, of a Barbaric Man,  
 There's no justice, except in truth,  
 Call him not, a cold-blooded brute,  
 He appreciates being called a Fisherman.

There are Ladies, so they say,  
 Who could not wear fur of seal,  
 It would keep reminding them of cruelty,  
 Let the beautiful mink coat be the rage,  
 Do they think the mink die of old age,  
 And donate their hides, to Society.

When Conservation be the motto,  
 Such Group's deserve a lot of praise,  
 But if its Hate of Killing, and love only for baby seals  
 Then they should get their Angles straighter,  
 As the Master of a freighter, 32  
 Now that they know, just how the Newfie Sealer feels.

John White passed away in 1976 at the age of fifty-  
 nine. His widow replied to my letter and said her husband

had composed topical verses since the early 1940's, with newspapers often providing inspirational ideas. He composed primarily for his own personal satisfaction, but he often shared his work with family and friends. The Whites knew men who had gone to the ice, but no one in their immediate family were sealers.

"The Greenpeace Mission" belongs to the sympathetic/reproach category of verses. Although there are sharp criticisms of the opposition, the emphasis is on justification and explaining "...just how the Newfie Sealer feels." The capitalizing of key words throughout is an interesting and unique feature of this particular poem. I do not have an explanation for this practice, unless it is intended to indicate where stress should fall (if recited), or perhaps it reflects what Mr. White felt to be significant.

The poem begins as a narrative--the scene, actors, and the action are identified--but it quickly becomes a lengthy counter-protest expression. The familiar arguments are presented, with repeated appeals for the fisherman's cause. The extinction theory is denied: "All our Experts say the Seal Fishery/ Is in no danger, becoming Extinct/ So what was the Greenpeace commotion all about?" The protest films are cited as injurious, and the unfairness of ignoring slaughterhouses as equally bloody and brutal is a complaint. While Newfoundlanders have humbly struggled: "Our Island has paid for every ounce of fat,"

protesters are reproached for their hypocrisy and greed.

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GROUP 2: POETS AND PERFORMERS, OR,

THE RECOGNIZED AMATEURS

This group acknowledges their special status as verse-makers. They have received recognition through limited publication and public performance and seem to openly enjoy the opportunity to participate. Their verses cover a variety of topics--sometimes a news event will stimulate a composition, or perhaps an especially strong emotion or opinion will suggest a verse to them. On occasion, verses are solicited by others who are familiar with their work. Style is flexible in that the poets are capable of expressing themselves seriously, satirically, and even frivolously, depending on the context.

Mary MacIsaac, Curling

"Swilin' '77"

The ice moved down in '77  
As in countless years before.  
With it came storms and hardship,  
For the sealers leaving shore.  
The harvest might be scanty,  
Or it might be bountiful,  
But the money earned by honest sweat  
Is better than the dole.

They couldn't go out fishing  
With the ice jammed tight on land,  
But there was meat aplenty,  
With the seal pups right at hand,  
And in their long tradition  
They walked out on heaving ice,  
To bring in the March harvest,  
That is part of northern life.

They knew the rules for killing,  
 As laid down by our country,  
 It was not in their nature  
 To adhere to cruelty;  
 But they came face to face with foes  
 That differed with their stand,  
 Who tried to stop our sealers,  
 And keep them on the land.

Degrading us, the Charlatans came,  
 With pockets lined with gold.  
 They came to save the "baby seals"  
 In copters, and so bold.  
 They pushed around our labouring men  
 Ignoring their invasion.  
 That angry Newfoundlanders rose  
 To voice their indignation.

The strangers got protection,  
 From our province-paid policemen.  
 Our men lay prostrate on the snow,  
 Aggressors walked on them.  
 Our spiritual leaders spoke for peace,  
 And for civility...  
 But policemen held the sealers down,  
 As the copters were set free.

Descendents from the July Drive,  
 And Vimy Ridge were there,  
 Who spurned the British insults,  
 That were hurled from London Square,  
 The slander from the poison pen,  
 Of Davies and his likes,  
 Had branded Newfoundlanders,  
 And impared their natural rights.

Now we have "human babes" to feed,  
 In the isle of Newfoundland,  
 This might be hard for slickers,  
 From outside to understand,  
 We have the elements to fight,  
 To earn the daily pay,  
 While parasites and hypocrites,  
 Take our good name away.

Don't come back, Brian Davies,  
 With your ill-begotten goods,  
 And Green Peace folk,  
 Don't foul our shores,  
 Stay in your neck of woods.  
 You can't expect a welcome,  
 From the people that you've bled--

Tis time you stopped your begging,  
And took "stock" of your head.<sup>33</sup>

Mary MacIsaac says she has been writing verses since childhood, "...when I caught the fever from my father and others who wrote verses on any unusual happening." Nearly seventy now, she describes her verse-making: "...like Paddy with a belly-ache--I'm all in spurts. There are some things that only a poem or song can justify!"

The MacIsaac family has been interested in traditional culture for many years, particularly Scottish dancing and music as played in the Codroy Valley. The family performs at festivals and concerts around the Province, and apparently enjoys the opportunity to participate with others on a semi-professional level.

Mary taught elementary school children for many years and put her verse-making talent to use making personalized poems for her students. (The collection was published as Newfie Rhymes). Though she has no illusions about the literary merit of most of her work, she enjoys writing, and sometimes thinks it pleases others.

I am reprinting a portion of her letter which describes her thoughts about "Swilin '77" as well as the emotions which stimulated the composition:

I'm very touchy about rights--and I just saw red. I sent my poem to Richard Cashin--and heard from him some months later! Had it published in the Humber Log (our weekly), and it went over well...

No one encouraged me to write "Swilin '77," that's

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<sup>33</sup> Recitation (St. John's, November 13, 1977).

one thing you don't get here--you've just got to take the bull by the horns yourself--even if you are a woman! I have had a lot of requests for this poem, and had duplicates made in order to satisfy. I sent one to the Toronto Star! I'm a bit shy about treking my work--perhaps a bit cowardly--in my home they sort of think it is a joke.

My great grandfather in the Codroy Valley was a successful seal hunter, captaining his own ship in the 1880's in the Gulf fishery. Later my grandfather on both sides of the family pursued the hunt in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. My father made his first and last voyage at the age of 19; he did not like clubbing the pup seals, but it was the custom to go to the fishery to prove your manhood.

My Scottish grandfather, John Gillis, described to his grandchildren, over and over again, the beauty of the sunrise on Easter Sunday morning and on the Gulf icefield. It was a phenomena of dancing light. Although we youngsters got up early every Easter morn to see the sun dance, we were always disappointed.

The last seal caught in my family was in the 1920's when my brother, Wallace Gillis, killed a seal in the Codroy Harbor and pulled it ashore--over the ice--with a string attached to the tail. He was exhausted when he landed ashore and no wonder--all the old timers had a great time teasing him in going against nature in hauling a seal against the grain--you know it wouldn't slip along the way he had it rigged up.... 34

Mrs. MacIsaac thinks the protesters are involved only because it is a lucrative business. "The protesters will get weaker as the voice of truth gets stronger. Frank Moores and others did a good job." She earnestly believes that Newfoundlanders should defend the hunt as vigorously as possible, for: "as stood our fathers, so should we."

"Swilin 77" is a strong and emphatic statement to protesters and Newfoundlanders alike. In some respects, it is a call for unity and determination to protect a traditional activity from external disturbance. The British who participated in the protest are chided with

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<sup>34</sup> Mary MacIsaac, Letter (April 10, 1978).

recollections of the fighting Newfoundlanders who gallantly gave their lives for the sake of their freedom.

Partially a narrative, the poem documents some of the news-worthy events of the 1977 protest--the picket line around Davies' helicopters, the RCMP who demanded that demonstrators disband, and the public meeting at the Curtis Collegiate High School in St. Anthony.

It is a poem of praise and blame, with bitter accusations levelled against the protesters and admiration for the sealers. There is little doubt about her position:

"Don't foul our shores/ Stay in your neck of woods/ You can't expect a welcome/ From the people that you've bled."

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Angus Lane, Buchans

"Green Peace or the Wearin' O' the Green"

All ye who know of sealers brave attend both young and old  
I feel it is my duty this story to unfold  
About these Green Peace people their dastardly scheme  
To have our little whitecoats awearin' o' the green.

That furry little creature with its coat of snowy white  
To the sealers, hard-earned money as the elements they  
fight

Where's our M.P.'s? --Our Government? Why don't they  
intervene

To prevent our whitecoats from awearin' o' the green.

Let's drive them back across the Gulf--clear across the  
land

Ah yes me boys they'll rue the day they came to New-  
foundland

We'll all know your color then 'twill be yellow not bright  
green

They would not dare to have our seals awearin' o' the  
green.

We have our muzzleloaders, the 12-gauge and the gaff  
 We can blast them all to kingdom come and then sit back  
 and laugh  
 At their crazy antics as they scamper from the scene  
 Where they would have the little ones awearin' o' the  
 green.

Man should not foul with nature's way but let it take it's  
 course.

God's plans we should not tamper with nor should we  
 doubt their source  
 Let's spray Brian Davies green--that's what he is 'twould  
 seem.

Then we'd have a limey awearin' o' the green.<sup>35</sup>

Angus Lane is fifty-six years old. Born in Fortune  
 Harbour, Notre Dame Bay, he worked as a weighmaster for  
 twenty-one years, and prior to that, he worked as a ware-  
 house checker. He has written verses since boyhood--  
 mostly satirical, for personal satisfaction and the amuse-  
 ment of his friends. Recently, Breakwater Books, Ltd.  
 released a 12" LP of his songs written about the Buchans  
 miners' strike (Come Hell or High Water, Breakwater 1001).

Angus' attitude towards the protesters is that they  
 are unemployed, publicity-seeking individuals who are  
 using the sealing issue as an easy way to earn money. He  
 thinks the protesters should be ignored, and believes the  
 Provincial government's 1978 pro-hunt campaign was success-  
 ful.

The song reprinted here was written for a variety  
 show presented in St. Theresa's parish on St. Patrick's  
 Day, 1976. The formulaic opening: "All ye who know of  
 sealers brave, attend both young and old," is an indica-

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<sup>35</sup> Angus Lane, Letter (April 10, 1978).



tion the song is intended for a sympathetic audience. "Our little whitecoats" suggests a sense of propriety which is repeated in the final stanza: "God's plans we should not tamper with nor should we doubt their source."

The retaliation threats, albeit facetious, imply that sealers take their work seriously and will not tolerate foolishness indefinitely. Normally, such threats would not be amusing, but in this context the satire is immediately discernible. By reversing the protesters' plans, i.e., spraying them with the dye intended for the seals, the author speaks for Newfoundlanders in the expression of hostility.

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Michael Butler, St. John's

"One Sealing Ship from Newfoundland," (1975)

In former years great fleets of ships  
To the icefields used to go  
Job Brothers and the Bowring firms  
Adventurous spirit did show  
Great ships like Beothic, the Neptune and Kyle  
Each spring to the ice, they'd be there in good style.

The Bloddhound and the Southern Cross  
The Viking, Labrador  
The Eagle and the Algerine  
The Newfoundland and more  
Great ships such as these were the pride of our Isle  
Each spring to the ice, they'd be there in good style.

But now today from Newfoundland  
To the icefield just one ship  
Her destination is the Front  
Perhaps she'll make one trip.  
A shame does it seem with the seals round our coast  
That only one ship can hunt seals at the most.

(continued)

The merchants now have lost the drive  
 Their former traders had  
 When the pioneering spirit lived  
 In years when times were bad  
 No risks they will venture or small quotas take  
 Less paying returns on their seal hunt they make.

With meat and fish so dear to buy  
 It seems an idea good  
 To send more ships out to the ice  
 And process seals for food  
 With Newfoundland so near to the seals when they come  
 It seems just a shame that we only take some.

If other nations kill our seals  
 Why not our ships the same?  
 Why let Norwegians fill their ships?  
 Where is our pride and shame?  
 They have to cross Oceans, great outfits to buy,  
 Yet we near the harvest, let our seal fishery die.

"The Greenpiece Intrusion," (1976)

The Greenpiece crowd, we say to you  
 Before it is too late  
 Don't come out here to Newfoundland  
 To stop our sealing date  
 Don't try to stop our fishermen  
 From killing seals they need  
 To make a living from the sea;  
 To warning such pay heed.

Few sealing ships are now engaged,  
 So sealing herds have grown  
 Not like in former days of hunt  
 When fabulous kills were known.  
 The seals must be in millions now  
 Off the Funks and to the South  
 When ships so few go out to kill  
 So why do Greenpiece pout.

You have no business to come here  
 The seals are not your own  
 So keep your green dye to yourselves  
 And wisely stay at home  
 Our fishermen will watch for you  
 Don't let them see your dye  
 For if they catch you using it  
 You may's well say: "GOOD BYE."

(continued)

We hope the Federal Government  
 Will enforce its regulations  
 To stop this interference  
 By the Greenpeace Dye Foundation  
 Those busy bodies we don't want  
 And neither do the seals  
 So stay at home you Greenpeace gripes,  
 Keep off from our Icefields.

"Leave Us in Peace," (1977)

Boo, boo to you Franz Weber,  
 Brian Davies and Greenpeace,  
 Go back from where you came from last,  
 And let us live in peace.

Who wants your presence here  
 You interfering crowd  
 "Go home and never come back again"  
 We warn you good and loud.

We're really come to something  
 To something that is new  
 When foreigners must come in here  
 And tell us what to do.

And give the seals a human cult,  
 A worship all their own,  
 A foolish sense of worship trait,  
 With extreme overtone.

What arrogance and dastard face,  
 To come a second year,  
 To try displace an industry,  
 Our fishermen hold so dear!

For sealing is our way of life  
 How dare you interfere!  
 From animals killed you get your meat  
 And fur on the coat you wear.

No one from here goes to your land  
 To interfere with you  
 He would be fined or put in jail  
 And be told just what to do.

But you so bare-faced and so bold  
 Come here for confrontation;  
 Cause trouble, and incite our men  
 By your senseless provocation.

(continued)

Our sealing hunt is lawful,  
 Conservation we uphold;  
 We kill seals the most humane way,  
 Not what the films told.

So Weber and the Greenpeace crowd,  
 Brian Davies and his crew;  
 Your time engage for better use  
 Find better things to do,

Stay home and fight abortion  
 Injustices and crime  
 Try fighting hunger for the poor  
 Then for seals no fighting time.

"Send-Off for Our Sealers," (1978)

Despite the cold and blustery day  
 It didn't keep the crowds away  
 From Dockside St. John's, 'twas suffice  
 Four ships were leaving for the ice.  
 A good send off with hearty cheer  
 Prefaced by service, band and prayer  
 The clergymen were there with grace  
 As the blessing of the ships took place  
 Hal Andrews chairman's job did lend  
 Saw program fulfilled to the end.  
 It seemed tradition born anew  
 With the public cheers for ships and crew  
 With rousing animation grand  
 'Twas a glorious day for Newfoundland.

The TV crews and camera men  
 Were backing ships and crews we send  
 Recording for the world to see  
 The importance of our seal industry  
 And while proceedings went with pride  
 The "Norma Gladys" she did glide  
 Across the harbor gracefully  
 To make sure things went smoothly  
 Back on the wharf while thousands cheered  
 A protestor Elliot did appear  
 He got into a fighting spree  
 And was taken into custody  
 The police were quick with sturdy hand  
 To make protestors understand  
 Their stunts to stop our men did fail  
 And soon they'd land themselves in jail.  
 And Captain Johnson spoke so plain  
 And proudly thanked the crowds who came  
 He knew the people's hearts were true  
 For wishing well their ships and crew. (continued)

The captain really felt enticed  
 To be going again out to the ice  
 And Premier Moores in parka red  
 Stood on the platform bare of head  
 While strong wind blew and snow whizzed by  
 He wished the sealers, Luck, Good Bye.  
 While bells did ring and whistles blared 36  
 The ships out through the Narrows steered.

from "So Many Snags for Newfoundland," (1978)

...And now our Newfoundlanders have to fight  
 to hunt our seals  
 They are snagged by opposition by the  
 Greenpeace howls and squeals;  
 They are snagged by Brian Davies who has  
 joined with one to strive,  
 Who claims he killed 12,000 seals and  
 skinned the pups alive... 37

Michael Butler was born in Bristol's Hope, Concep-  
 tion Bay, "shortly after the first World War." He is  
 retired now after devoting his working years to a teaching  
 career.

A prolific writer, he reasons why he composes for a  
 variety of purposes: "...to express my views; to see them  
 in print (not too proud); to create enjoyment; to keep  
 my mind at work and not let it become rusty; to bear  
 witness to God and to my country; to be of some help  
 in adding to our Newfoundland songs and tradition; it's  
 a great pastime when indoors; and finally, I LIKE DOING  
 IT."

Mr. Butler writes about all subjects that interest

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<sup>36</sup> Michael Butler sent all the poems (with the excep-  
 tion of the last example), with a very detailed letter, on  
 March 30, 1978.

<sup>37</sup> Evening Telegram (June 16, 1978), p. 6.

him, and his own listing included: "war, nature, outer space, politics, religion, Remembrance Day, peace, vandalism, abortion, education, Christian Brothers, tributes, entertainment, Christmas, Lower Churchill, Quebec, etc." He writes mostly for personal enjoyment, but he shares many of his compositions with his family and frequently submits letters-to-the-editor with poems to accompany his thoughts. Three archival sources have files of his work--the Newfoundland Historical Society, the public library (Arts and Culture Center, St. John's), and the library at the Newfoundland Teachers' Association.

Mr. Butler's verses have been published in the N.T.A. journals, the Newfoundland Quarterly, Cap and Gown, the Muse, as well as in local newspapers.

While living at St. George's Court, St. John's, Mr. Butler made the acquaintance of Cecil Mouland, one of the survivors of the 1914 Newfoundland disaster and this friendship may account for the author's continuing interest in the seal fishery. He says, "I wrote those verses about the seal protesters to strengthen and support Newfoundland's stand in its defense--of the seal hunt, and for the enjoyment I get in knowing I have helped. If my verses activated others to participate in anti-protest activity in any form (apart from violence or illegal kind), so much the better, but I hardly know that. Perhaps they were not taken that seriously."

A chronological analysis of Michael Butler's sealing verses is useful because it demonstrates how his attitude changes. In the 1975 verse, he laments the passing of a tradition and suggests that apathy--on the part of merchants and the government--is responsible for the decline of the fishery. He uses his verses to communicate his own personal values, with emphasis on integrity, courage, and duty towards history and tradition. "One Sealing Ship from Newfoundland," utilizes a familiar folksong feature--it presents a catalogue of famous sealing ships, lest the public forget the past. It is really a protest expression as it describes and criticizes a contemporary problem, and it lacks the indignation and argumentative qualities of the 1976-78 verses.

"The Greenpiece Intrusion" (1976), marks a shift in Mr. Butler's attitude. Although he makes reference to the reduced sealing fleet, he no longer chides Newfoundlanders for their lack of support. While acknowledging the conservation issue, he reasons there must be more seals than ever before because each year, fewer are slaughtered. He admonishes the "Greenpiece Dye Foundation" to stay at home, threatening that the fishermen will be watching and if they catch them using the dye, "You may's well say GOOD BYE." In a sense this is curious because Michael Butler is a very religious man who has no tolerance for violence or illegal activities. The verse functions to assert Newfoundland's right to pursue the

hunt and boldly states: "So stay at home you Greenpiece gripes/ Keep off from our icefields." The rhetoric is unmistakable--"our" icefields and Greenpiece "gripes" suggest the author views the conflict as unjust and irresponsible.

By 1977, Michael Butler's attitude towards interference by outsiders was indignant, incredulous, and explicit. "Leave us in Peace" not only documents the principal actors of the protest (Weber, Davies, and Greenpeace--by now he has corrected his spelling), but also is derivative of a speech made by Richard Cashin, who suggested that seal-worship was becoming a new cult. Mr. Butler condemns "foreigners" who have the audacity to try to tell others what to do when injustices are rampant in their own homelands. He refers to the confrontation in St. Anthony, and later on the ice, when sealers were provoked but prohibited from reacting. This poem is the most emotional of his sealing series and possibly is the most spontaneous, defiant outburst of frustration and anger that the author could allow himself to make.

The following March (1978), Newfoundlanders rallied to demonstrate their support behind the sealers; "Send-Off for Our Sealers" is a narrative account of the events of Sunday, March 5, 1978. It is a verse celebrating the unity of Newfoundlanders and their determination to revive a faltering custom. Mr. Butler is obviously



pleased with this renewed public spirit and the poem conveys this sense of approval.

Later in the Spring, the author submitted a poem to the Evening Telegram entitled, "So Many Snags for Newfoundland." It is a lament for all the ill-fated projects and economic disappointments experienced by the Province, but he tries to encourage his readers to struggle on and be faithful: "But fight, we will, we won't give in, our future is at stake..." The sixth stanza makes reference to the sealing controversy and rebukes the Newfoundlander who turned against his homeland to work with Brian Davies (Ray Elliott). The tone is resigned and somewhat bitter—the anger of some of his earlier verses has dissipated.

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### GROUP 3: PUBLIC VOICES

Nish Collins, Art Scammell, and John Crosbie are familiar names to those who have access to the printed and electronic media. They are recognized "voices" of the people, whose energies and careers are intimately tied to preserving and supporting the interests of Newfoundlanders. They are articulate, self-conscious spokesmen for a large and often anonymous constituency. Arguing from a common rhetorical base, their verses are truly cultural statements which transcend social boundaries and are meaningful to many.

Nish Collins, St. John's"Our Lips are Sealed"

A little late for Premier Moores  
 to make his overture  
 When horse is stolen it's too late  
 to lock the stable door  
 The damage is already done  
 by Davies and Greenpeace  
 Bardot acted out her part  
 "zees cruelty" to cease.

That was the time for Premier Moores  
 his office to assert  
 It's much too late, the damage done;  
 our seal hunt has been hurt.  
 Protesters should have been denied  
 the access to the Front  
 Instead of curtesies to them  
 we should have been more blunt.

Greenpeace, Weber, anti-hunt  
 proponents got for free  
 A coverage quite ill-deserved  
 through our stupidity  
 In letting them advance so far,  
 what they said wasn't true  
 A challenge to the media  
 let's see what you can do. 38

"Mammals and Men"

This Brian Davies, Who is he?  
 Who makes waves of publicity  
 And pitch emotional employs  
 To make a multi-nation noise  
 Face value the remarks he made  
 With manner confident displayed  
 Revealing questions none did ask  
 Of any background for his task  
 In what did Davies graduate  
 Why to seals did he gravitate  
 Could he have attained his degree  
 From synthetic fur industry  
 A mammal can't equate with man  
 A life state there's no higher than  
 What's all this talk of "baby seal"  
 When making a tear jerk appeal  
 A "pup" is this young mammal's due

Then why creation misconstrue  
 All form of growth, life-land and sea  
 Were made, then man, crowning glory  
 The other forms of things alive  
 Designed to help humans survive  
 Through slick promotion harm was done  
 Big question, is there anyone  
 Who can dig up the Davies deal  
 That makes him expert on the seal.<sup>39</sup>

Nish Collins is a regular columnist for the St. John's Daily News, writing the "Rhymes of the Times" column since 1971. When I asked him what he thought his rhymes accomplished, he replied: "...communication. Somewhere along the route I hope to touch all my readers. Through the conciseness of my writings, I feel I can emphasize a certain topic." Although Mr. Collins claims to have no favorite writers, he recalls reading Edgar A. Guest as a boy. "I do not model my writings after anyone, the spontaneity of my writings makes them original."

The "Rhymes" are always topical, usually commenting on local issues. Sometimes they are political while others are more reflective and personal comments. Highly esoteric verses, appreciation of the "Rhymes" requires a familiarity with local personalities and events. In a sense, they are editorials in verse format.

"Our Lips are Sealed" refers to Premier Moores' pro-hunt publicity tour in early 1978. The effort to tell the "facts" was extremely costly and many Newfoundlanders

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(January 10, 1978), p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> Daily News (February 27, 1978), p. 4.

were skeptical about its success. The government had been slow to enter the controversy in previous years, and the blitz media campaign of 1978 was perceived by some as a politically-motivated scheme. The media's role in giving coverage to the protesters was another area of frequent criticism--many observers believed the issue would have faltered several years earlier had the press refused to participate.

"Mammals and Men," is more specific in its appeal. Through pointed questions: "This Brian Davies, Who is He?," Collins argues with the familiar rhetoric of counter-protest. Davies is satirized as a zealot without authority, and the seal hunt is justified by reasoning that "...man, crowning glory/ The other forms of things alive/ Designed to help humans survive." It is the only verse in this collection which cites divine sanction as the ultimate justification for the hunt.

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John Crosbie, St. John's

(Untitled)

We got your message on the seals,  
 From whom we get some fur and meals;  
 You ask us for a closed season  
 Without you giving cogent reason.  
 You say you hate to have seals die,  
 While pigs and horses in France expire,  
 While snails and geese and frogs and cattle  
 Every day die with the French death rattle!  
 And what about your tortured goose,  
 Force-fed until his liver's loose,  
 Ready for the foie gras boost!  
 Your tears for seals do not impress

Until French sins you do confess;  
 This offer should give you a thrill:  
 Abolish for a year the Frenchman's kill  
 Of horses, geese, frogs and the snail:  
 Of nuclear testing, stop that tale:  
 Preserve the grape, don't make the wine,  
 And we will leave the seals behind.  
 Now France should learn that ancient truth,  
 That tit for that is always couth.  
 You eat your snails and frog's legs dipper,  
 But I will stick with rum and flipper.<sup>40</sup>

John Crosbie, Member of Parliament, St. John's (West), is a career politician, and writes verse occasionally to "amuse myself and the audience is usually just a few friends." With this satirical ode to Brigitte Bardot, Mr. Crosbie's verse-making went public, and he provided the House of Commons and his Newfoundland constituency with a good laugh about a subject which ordinarily is not very amusing.

Although he has no close friends or immediate relatives who ever went to the ice, the Crosbie family sent ships regularly until the Sir John Crosbie and Chesley A. Crosbie were retired from sealing activities. As a Newfoundlanders who promotes industry, John Crosbie is concerned that the anti-hunt campaign will cause the decline of pelt prices and consequently hasten the closure of the fishery. He does not argue romantically and his reasoning is based on strict marketing principles.

Brigitte Bardot is the scapegoat for France's political stand vis-a-vis seal pelt importation, since her

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<sup>40</sup> John Crosbie, Daily News (December 23, 1977), p. 1.

appearance with Franz Weber and Brian Davies in 1977 stimulated a lot of angry commentary. In some respects, this verse belongs to the celebratory/condemning category because it argues for fairness and justice through counter-accusation and defense. As an amusement, composed somewhat whimsically, it may be classified as epideictic rhetoric.

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Art Scammell, St. John's

"A Sealer's Song"

Come all you Newfoundlanders and listen to  
my song  
About St. Anthony's visitors from "away" and  
"upalong";  
There were movie types and media types and  
Mounties some fivescore,  
If we were bent on violence they'd need a  
hundred more.

They are out to ban the seal hunt and this they  
mean to do,  
Brian Davies and the Greenpeacers and all  
their motley crew;  
This year they've got Franz Weber with phony  
fur to sell-  
A bleeding heart from Switzerland who thinks  
he's William Tell.

They say the seals are threatened but the  
evidence is clear,  
With quotas carefully controlled, of that there  
is, no fear;  
We're the endangered species who live by  
coastal seas,  
We kill the seal as we kill fish to feed our  
families.

A bedlamer boy from Greenpeace he chained  
on to the "whip",  
And was dunked into the water by the rolling  
of the ship;

We had a job to save him in all the fuss and racket,  
 But I bet his pelt wouldn't have been worth as much as a Ragged Jacket.

When Brigitte said in Paris she cuddled a whitecoat dear,  
 Sure every swiler in the land he grinned from ear to ear;  
 He knows from long experience she's pilin' on the lies,  
 A real whitecoat's talons would have slashed her face and eyes.

They call us cruel, barbaric, hunting seals just for the thrill--  
 These pampered city slickers that a day's hard work would kill;  
 What do they know of challenges of storm and sea and ice  
 That dare the blood to answer and to pay the sealers' price?

They're out for front-page stories, they've come so far to roam.  
 And blood on the ice will show up well on T.V. screens back home;  
 They know their media bosses have paid good money out  
 If they don't send "juicy" stories their jobs are "up the spout."

There's many things we don't approve in countries far away.  
 How people act and dress and talk and how they earn their pay;  
 But we don't get up a hate campaign and stir up children too,  
 To force our views on other folks as these do-gooders do.

Our governments must keep these types from off the whelping ice,  
 Or there'll be tragedies to tell--we're men, not frightened mice;  
 We merit more protection than a motion on the floor--  
 Where will you get your flippers when the seal hunt is no more?

We're not adverse to meeting up with a star from Hollywood,

We sure would like to rescue her from an  
 angry old Dog Hood;  
 But the Arctic floes are not the place, Yvette,  
 to use your wiles,  
 We're not spruced up for courtin' when we're  
 out there peltin' swiles!

We have to take from nature whate'er the  
 seasons bring,  
 We're fishermen in summer and swilers in the spring;  
 If you don't approve the seal hunt, you have a  
 right to say.  
 But when we go out on the ice, don't try to bar  
 our way.

So here's a health to Romeo, who took the  
 sealers' part,  
 He stood up to protesters, he has our cause at  
 heart;  
 And raise your glass to Tommy Hughes who  
 tells it like he knows,  
 And don't forget Rick Cashin when you're  
 culling friends from foes.<sup>41</sup>

Born in Change Islands, Art Scammell is one of the  
 most beloved songwriter-poets of Newfoundland. He holds  
 a B.A. degree from McGill University, an M.A. from the  
 University of Vermont, and an honorary Doctor of Laws  
 from Memorial University. R.M. Mowbray, University  
 Orator, said of the candidate at the Spring, 1977, con-  
 vocation: "...here is a bard, a poet and writer, a  
 teacher; a livyer whose devotion to Newfoundland has  
 been tempered by living away for awhile."<sup>42</sup>

A schoolteacher by profession, Mr. Scammell taught  
 in Montreal for thirty years before returning home in  
 1970. His most popular song, "The Squid-Jiggin' Ground,"

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<sup>41</sup> Decks Awash (June, 1977), p.6.

<sup>42</sup> Memorial University Gazette (June, 1977), p. 14.



has the distinction of being considered by many as the unofficial anthem of Newfoundland.

"A Sealers' Song," like many protest songs, has been adapted to a familiar tune--in this case, the popular "Old Polina." The author draws on all three rhetorical strategies to convey his opinion about the sealing controversy. He celebrates swilers for their industriousness, and condemns the protesters as: "...city slickers that a day's hard work would kill." He cites federal Fisheries Minister, Romeo LeBlanc, IFFAW President, Richard Cashin, and Tom Hughes as men worthy of praise for their outspoken support for Newfoundlanders, while the opposition is ridiculed as "bleeding hearts," "bedlamers," and "media types."

The tone of the song changes from stanza to stanza. It begins with the traditional "Come all you" opening-- a method of inviting sympathetic attention to a narrative which is intended to be informative as well as pleasing. Some verses are appeals for compassion from those who are unfairly critical: "There's many things we don't approve in countries far away/ ...But we don't get up hate campaigns and stir up children too..." and again, "If you don't approve the seal hunt, you have a right to say/ But when we go out on that ice, don't try to bar our way." The argument of extinction is countered with "...the evidence is clear/ With quotas carefully controlled, of that there is no fear." There is the plea for the plight

of Newfoundlanders: "We're the endangered species who live by coastal seas."

Elements of sarcasm, with references to starlets (Bardot and Mimieux), contribute humor to an otherwise serious subject. Facetiously, the media are reprimanded for their part in reporting only the sensational events to the exclusion of other relevant information. From an aesthetic viewpoint, "A Sealers' Song" is probably the best of the counter-protest collection. Although Mr. Scammell is noted for his verse-making, his sentiments and rhetorical strategies parallel those of the other, less-skilled but equally motivated poets. The poem is assured a place in protest history since it has already been reprinted in several collections of sealing material.

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#### GROUP 4: THE PERFORMER POETS

Ron MacEachern, Pat Sulley, Gary O'Driscoll, and Dayton Larson share one common trait--they are professional performers, often remunerated for their music. However, their experience and public exposure vary considerably. Ron MacEachern has become a well-known folk entrepreneur in the Atlantic provinces, and has made appearances on national radio and television programs; Pat Sulley is a local St. John's musician who occasionally performs in other communities; Gary O'Driscoll performs in the Bay Bulls area and appeared at the St. John's 2nd

Annual Folk Arts Festival, July 1-3, 1978. While Dayeton Larson has aspirations for recognition as a composer/performer in his own right, to date his experience has been limited to playing lead guitar with a group called "Freedom."

Ron MacEachern, Sydney, Nova Scotia

"Newfoundland Sealers" (c 1977)

chorus: Oh ye Newfoundland sealers all hands be behind ye  
you're the salt of the earth each and every man,  
all hands for Newfoundland's right in the fishery  
Davies be gone for you're less than a man.

Now I shall not be long with the words I would  
tell you  
let our island be rid of this Green Peacer band  
there's not one man nor woman should stand for  
their treachery  
all hands for Newfoundland sealers will stand.

(chorus)

And our children will go as their fathers before  
them  
our men who have toiled and our men who have died  
will not be put under by the filth of the Green-  
peace  
our rights and our island will not be denied.

(chorus)

--tune: "The Ryans and the Pittmans," or,  
"We'll Rant and We'll Roar."

(Untitled), c 1977

Oh me boys they are the sealers  
no they're not the money stealers  
like the companies that control the Greenpeace dollars  
them that preaches and that teaches  
still they always come like leaches  
for our fish and for our seal when hunger hollers.

Send me pogy way of Logy Bay  
for on this Rock I mean to stay (chorus)  
I'm telling you this my dear so I will save ye

the trouble and the commotion  
 of coming across the little ocean  
 with that lyin' gutless theiving Brian Davies.

yes me boys they are the sealers  
 no they wouldn't be the stealers  
 makes our living from the sea its very proper  
 and sure from here to Harbour Grace  
 there's not one man'll disgrace this place  
 like the likes of a Royal Canadian Mounted Copper.

(chorus)

And you boys up in Toronto  
 where you get the jobs so pronto  
 working in factories working in canneries makin' deals  
 either your canneries going to shut down  
 or the staff in half will cut down  
 when me boys refuse to go for fish and seal.

(chorus)

--tune: "Off to Philadelphia," or, "My Name is  
 Mrs. Nevilles and I'm from the Higher Levels."

A native Nova Scotian, Ron MacEachern studied for  
 awhile at Memorial University and, while studying, became  
 sympathetic to the sealing issue. He admits that a few  
 years ago he probably would not have written the same  
 song, but now his sentiments are definitely pro-sealing  
 after his experiences in Newfoundland. "I wrote the  
 songs both in about a week after I got a call from Chris  
 Brooks who said he wanted me to play with the Mummies'  
 anti-Greenpeace show... I knew that I would be able to  
 sing and bring attention to the other side of the issue."

Ron adapted both songs to tunes already familiar to  
 Newfoundlanders, and the message he conveys is one of  
 support with references to tradition, the fishery, and  
 self-sufficiency. The emotionalism of other songs is

missing, perhaps because he recognizes his role as a performer who acts as a catalyst for action rather than as the agent.<sup>43</sup>

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Pat Sulley, St. John's

"Coffee on the Last Day" (c 1978)

Have one more cup of coffee she said before you go  
Oh no, I must be leaving now, to brave the truly cold.  
There's a ship out in the harbor and its ready for to go  
To hunt the seal to make a meal to keep my woman warm.

I love your face I love your hands I love to watch you work  
I love your fresh hot-battered bread the way you hang your  
skirt.

Get out she said and don't come back and hung on to my shirt.  
You're a brazen lad and I love you mad, don't leave me sad  
and hurt.

You know it must be cold out there when Shelagh's Brush  
is on

When March steps in your back is bared and bodies do get  
numb.

That sailors who go sailing must sail until they're done  
On the icy fields where life is real and nature hides  
her guns.

And when I think of frozen ice it chills me to the bone.  
I think of you and what I'd do if you did not come home.  
You shouldn't think of me like that, I'm strong and still  
I'm young.

I love you true, your eyes of blue, your body safe and  
young.

The bells are ringing in the town, the anchor's being  
weighed

From ladies on the dock no sound; the schooner leaves  
the bay

Into the wind-swept ocean to prairies cold and grey  
To the frozen fields where life is real and winter's made  
to pay.

Pat Sulley began writing this song in 1977 but,

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<sup>43</sup> Ron MacEachern, Letter (March 10, 1978).

he said, "I had to leave it for awhile to arrive at a more objective, less emotional song." The song is based on a hypothetical situation--the setting is the turn of the century and the actors are newly-weds. Neither the bride nor the husband want to be apart but both know it is necessary if they are to survive the winter.

Although this is not a counter-protest song, its composition was stimulated by the renewed interest in sealing and consequently the hardships of a sealer's way of life have become celebrated. Pat Sulley feels very strongly that the protesters, and Greenpeace in particular, are using the seal hunt for their own financial gain.

"Coffee on the Last Day" is an effort to depict an emotional situation, a scene which undoubtedly was re-created many times over when sealing was a major industry. Through recreation of a tender moment between a man and a woman, its appeal is universal.

There are interesting parallels to Solomon Samson's poem, "A Sealer's Reply to his Wife,"<sup>44</sup> although a note suggests the characters are sixty years of age instead of newly-weds. "So Maggie my darling/ I must leave you alone," is the husband's way of comforting his wife, promising, "And when we return/ With a good bumper trip/ You will soon forget/ That I gave you the slip." The difference in rhetorical strategy is that Sulley's "husband" is not really anxious to go to the ice, but economic necessity

<sup>44</sup> Solomon Samson, "A Sealer's Reply to His Wife," in

is implied as the cause for his leaving. Maggie's more mature husband is responding to "The call of the ice-fields, ... makes me feel restless/ At this time of year." Both verses belong to the sympathetic/reproach category, although the opposition is nature and potential hazards rather than protesters. 45

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Dayton Larson, Hare Bay

"Why"

Lying down under the noon sun  
 Watching little ones close by  
 Watching her try to move and have some fun  
 Never thinking she would die  
 Only just a few days old  
 And little strength for her to move  
 Just beginning to start on life  
 No hurry to rush it through.

Her fur so soft, and snowy white  
 Reflecting the afternoon light  
 Her two big eyes look in wonder  
 On a world that shines so bright  
 And a cute dark little nose  
 That glistens with the frost  
 Trusting those she doesn't even know  
 Not knowing that she is lost.

Her beauty is there for all to see  
 Please... just let her be  
 There she is, so wild and free  
 A marvel of life for me  
 Then suddenly she's gone  
 Only red... dead remains  
 It makes me wonder why  
 Did she have to die?  
 I wonder why?

↓ Dayton Larson is a young man whose composition is introspective and very personal. "Most of my writing

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A Glimpse of Newfoundland in Poetry and Pictures, ed. Robert Saunders (Poole: J. Looker, Ltd., 1963), p. 41.

45 Pat Sulley, Phone conversation (March 23, 1978).

has occurred under personal strain or strife. So you can place yourself in the position of a mother seal on the ice, or just as yourself who lost your lover, or an ideal situation of life." He refers to his song as a ballad, blues-style, with a sentimental attitude for the seal. "I looked at, and talked with people on both sides of the situation, and I mixed it up with a broken love affair and came up with this song when I was in Quebec, January 1-8, 1978, while on tour."

Dayeton began writing songs about ten years ago, and his concerns are usually about people--their emotions, incidents, and experiences. While not expressly a song of counter-protest, it, like Pat Sulley's, belongs to this particular decade when the imagery of seals, death, and survival are paramount cultural topics.

Although the tone and lyrics imply sympathy for the seal, Dayeton is quite vocal about Brian Davies: "I can't think of any logical reason for him to pick on the seal hunt unless he thinks he is the Jesus Christ of seals and wants to be a martyr for them. As for accomplishments, I feel he wants to be crucified in which he should have no problem finding a carpenter in Newfoundland to do the job on him."<sup>45</sup> The language, tone, and implication of such a statement is reminiscent of many of the callers to open-line radio programs and threats against Ray Elliott.

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<sup>45</sup> Dayeton Larson, Letter (March 31, 1978).



Gary O'Driscoll, Bay Bulls

"A Sealing Song" (c 1978)

Early in the month of March the sealing is beginning  
While back there in the abattoirs the butchers they are  
skinning  
\*Baby lambs and baby hams to clothe and feed the nations.  
While sealers brave the elements to reach their destina-  
tion.

Johnson in his Lady ship sails on the north Atlantic  
He keeps his head to all that's said despite the protest  
frantic.

Davies and that Greenpeace bunch are screaming with emotion  
While simple men are laboring out on the frozen ocean.

Living in the stormy white all in the dead of winter  
Slaving in this bloody hell the papers call adventure  
Facing death with every step to feed his wife and family  
Loving not the deed he does nor does he find it manly.

Actresses and Congressmen come in the fair blue morning  
Caring not for man or seal, publicity they're yearning  
Cowhide gloves and moneyed belts caress the tearless white-  
coat.

Each year this plastic pantomime is enacted on the ice  
floes.

The protest is big business now, yes bigger than the  
sealing

To people all around the world for money they're appealing  
With falsities and pictures and emotions they're deceiving  
From people who are blinded untold billions they're  
receiving.

Now to conclude and finish, of my people I will tell  
A thousand men have frozen stiff out on the Arctic hell  
Some say they are barbarians, our dignity they slander  
While I am proud to tell you, I'm a native Newfoundlander.<sup>46</sup>

Gary O'Driscoll is a recent Memorial University  
graduate who hopes to pursue a career in real estate. He  
does not perform regularly, but he occasionally sings  
at special events--conventions, the St. John's Folk Club,

<sup>46</sup> Gary O'Driscoll, St. John's Folk Arts Council, 2nd  
Annual Festival (July 3, 1978).

and festivals. He wrote "A Sealing Song" in 1978 because he heard so many people "getting upset and angry, and at the time, I was getting upset in the same way, and so, rather than be arguing all the time, I just wrote a song about it."

The song is sung as a lament, with stress given to the hardships of a sealer's life. There is reproach for the protesters who wear "cowhide gloves and moneyed belts," appealing with "falsities and pictures," and receiving "untold billions" from people around the world. In the sense the song praises simple men, "...slaving in the bloody hell the papers call adventure/ facing death with every step to feed (his) wife and family..." it belongs to the celebratory/condemning rhetorical category.

"A Sealing Song" belongs to 1978 because it refers to the presence of the two U.S. Congressmen (Jeffords and Ryan) who witnessed the hunt at the invitation of the Greenpeace Foundation. It is also the first song to suggest "the protest is big business now, yes bigger than the sealing."

A true counter-protest song, each verse contains an argument or counter-argument: 1) reference to abattoirs is an oblique rebuttal to charges of cruel slaughtering of seal pups; 2) the contrast between protesters "screaming with emotion" while sealers labor "out on the frozen ocean" is sharply drawn; "Johnson" is Captain Morrissey

Johnson, skipper of the Lady Johnson II; 3) the charge of sadism levelled against sealers is denied: "loving not the deed he does nor does he find it manly;" 4) the common image of the whitecoat pup "crying" is corrected with the phrase "tearless whitecoat;" 5) financial profit and the use of false propoganda is charged against the protesters, while Newfoundlanders (verse 6) are praised for their valor and dignity. The performer concludes with a bold assertion: "While I am proud to tell you, I'm a native Newfoundlander."

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#### Summary

Sealing counter-protest verses and songs are not likely to circulate in oral tradition or be performed by anyone other than their original composers because they are such extremely personal expressions of sentiment. While they may be appreciated by wide audiences and readers (in Newfoundland), they are difficult to repeat or memorize because they do not employ common formulaic openings or phrases as do other types of traditional folk-songs. Incorporation of names, specific events, and familiar rhetorical arguments contribute to their esoteric nature, and accounts for their temporal popularity.

Significantly, most composers acknowledged the spontaneity of their work. Often written hastily after listening to a news broadcast about the protest, the songs and poems are efforts to communicate a countering

argument or opinion. Only the lyrical songs of Sulley and Larson are reflective in a personal, introspective sense, and the others are expressed as group or collective sentiment, relying on culturally-based arguments and strategy for their appeal.

Frequent tonal switching, or inter-changeability of counter-protest rhetoric, may not be a deliberate compositional technique. It may be an unconscious attempt to temper emotionally-based sentiment with reason, since one of the most common remarks about the protest is that it is an emotional issue which requires more information and greater compassion. Composers may be stimulated to express their opinion during periods of heightened emotion but, in the process of writing, they may recognize the advantage of other rhetorical approaches. I believe this explains why essentially celebratory/condemning verses move towards a sympathetic/reproachful appeal before concluding with adamant statements of justification. In other words, sealing counter-protest expressions are initially defensive, then attempt to rationalize, and ultimately confirm their initial position with defiant or aggressive assertions of right.

Angus Lane's "Green Peace or the Wearin' o' the Green" is the only song which is almost consistently satirical, but even it does not masquerade the underlying sentiment of anger and frustration. Facetious/satirical verses are usually rhetorical devices of

defense or rationalization. The fact that composers chose to conclude their work with celebratory/condemning expressions suggests the protest has retained its ability to induce emotional reactions. It is also a clear indication that Newfoundlanders perceive the sealing industry to be threatened, and suggests further that they will not relinquish this tradition for reasons alien to their views or way of life.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has been based for the most part on materials collected from mass communication media. As Donald A. Bird suggests, the folklorist: "...must consider the media for folkloric functions of entertainment, integration, transmission of heritage, maintenance of status quo, and social control."<sup>1</sup> When we choose to emphasize cultural context as the source of expressive behavior, it is essential to consider all forms of interpersonal communication.

The sealing controversy was not isolated to a single event, but was waged by protesters and counter-protesters through the media over a period of time. Despite the fact that objection was levelled at a small group of people who participated in the annual whitecoat slaughter, the sealers themselves were only slightly disturbed by harassment at the ice. Curiously, the focus of world ire was directed at the citizens of St. Anthony, Newfoundlanders and occasionally, all Canadians (a London, England, billboard depicted a sealer about to club a whitecoat and the caption read: "Canada's Shame"). Acceleration of news by the media, as well as its capacity for selection and dissemination, unquestionably contributed to the success of the protest and subsequent emergence of

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<sup>1</sup> Donald A. Bird, "A Theory for Folklore in Mass Media," Southern Folklore Quarterly 40(1976), p. 299.

counter-protest expressions. Several verse-makers acknowledged their work was an immediate and reactionary response to news broadcasts (Sheardown and Goobie), while others attributed their compositions to cumulative frustration and anger at what they perceived to be misinformed and irresponsible reports.

Few Newfoundlanders ever saw Brian Davies or Greenpeace members, yet negative stereotypical images were formed from the observation and hearing of televised and radio broadcasts, as well as through newspaper accounts. While it may be that mass media popularizes and destroys folklore genres and performances, it should be noted that other genres are created by the media.<sup>2</sup> The rhetorical expressive strategies used in counter-protest are examples of this process; the fact that there are only a limited number of countering arguments, with innumerable variations, indicates: 1) the large degree of audience (and societal) agreement achieved through circulation of common ideas, images and attitudes, and 2) that common cultural experience affects interpretation of events in addition to shaping subsequent expressive behavior.

The latter point is demonstrated by the nature of evidence used by Newfoundlanders to counter the protesters' charges. Preference for oral testimony and personal experience--as opposed to statistical data--reflects

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<sup>2</sup> Bird, p. 287.

traditional self (or community) reliance, rather than dependence on information from anonymous, bureaucratic sources. Further, there is not a one-to-one correspondence between protesters' arguments and the counter-arguments offered by Newfoundlanders. In Chapter IV, I suggested the protest was waged with imagery of innocent animals, inhumanely slaughtered by cruel methods. Depletion of the species, hunting to support a "trinket fur" industry, and uncertain economic return for three weeks' effort, were other central themes.

The counter-protest effort argued from a human perspective; "Save our Swilers" was the response to the "Save the Seals" campaign. Humble, hard-working, God-fearing family men were the champions of the Newfoundland argument, with emphasis on economic necessity and occupational hazard and hardship. Statistics detailing the actual number of men engaged in the seal fishery were almost irrelevant. The attack on the character and integrity of Newfoundlanders was interpreted as slanderous and equated with blasphemy, for justification of the hunt was based on tradition and the belief in divine sanction. While protesters dismissed such arguments as out-dated and ecologically irresponsible, Newfoundlanders continued to cite these reasons as their rationale for supporting the seal hunt.

To quote Donald Bird once again, a revision of the term, "the folk" is needed if we acknowledge how the



the media increasingly influences our lore.<sup>3</sup> The veracity of this is proven by the material and sources quoted in this work, for it is difficult to classify verse-makers from such divergent backgrounds as "the folk" as if they belong to a unitary class or group. The composers of counter-protest verse, be they amateurs, professional writers, or folksong entrepreneurs, do comprise a shared interest group when they express their sentiments about sealing and the protest in a patterned, predictable way. The selection and preference for certain communication channels, i.e., letters to the editor, radio open-line shows, and public performance situations (clubs, festivals, and concerts), is an indication of the desire to share highly personal sentiments in public.

Roger Abrahams posited a theory of differential involvement between performer and audience, dependent on context and genre.<sup>4</sup> In conversational genres, involvement is immediate and direct, and expressions tend to be impersonal. At the opposite end of the arc lie the static genres, or those where the "performer (is) completely removed from the performance after the object is made."<sup>5</sup> Verses submitted to newspapers may be classified as belonging to the static genres:

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<sup>3</sup> Bird, p. 287.

<sup>4</sup> Roger Abrahams, "The Complex Relations of Simple Forms," Genre II (June, 1969), pp. 104-127.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

...the one, constant rhetorical feature of static forms...in the process of removal they reinstitute an interpersonal approach--they speak to each member of the audience as an individual by using the first person point of view.<sup>6</sup>

The songs and poetry of searing counter-protest are mainly written in the first person-plural ("we"), emphasizing the division between Newfoundlanders and outsiders ("they"), while at the same time promoting internal solidarity:

No, we are working, fighting people,  
We have struggled and are proud of our name  
So to you who do us wrong  
Why come to where you don't belong? (Pitts)

Expression is direct and often hostile; performer/audience distance permits aggression within socially-approved boundaries. Since the audience is largely internal (intra-Provincial), opposition and objection is rarely expressed. The inclusion of specific incidents and cultural stereotypes gives the verses a highly esoteric quality. To the outsider, many of the verses are unintelligible or criticized as doggerel, unworthy of response.<sup>7</sup>

Abrahams argues that dramatic focus in the static genres shifts from conflict to resolution:

Action is stopped in favor of a consideration of emotional situation; the scene is generally depicted as occurring after action is completed. Such pieces take for granted some knowledge of the preceding events on the part of the audience.<sup>7a</sup>

This point is confirmed by counter-protest verses--

<sup>6</sup> Abrahams, p. 119.

<sup>7</sup> Memorial University Gazette (July, 1978), p. 2.

<sup>7a</sup> Abrahams, p. 121.

audience sympathy is elicited through persuasive language while events and story-line are less-well organized.

Characterization is minimal and notable protesters (Davies, Weber, Bardot) are named but rarely described. Greenpeace figures prominently because the name lends itself to word-play. Collectively, the names are symbols and the locus for directed hostility, expressed differentially as anger, sarcasm, or incredulity.

#### Anger

For we're not like the people who kill their own kind  
 We don't hunt for pleasure and this you will find  
 We're not like you people that's putting it blunt  
 So mind your own business stay off from our hunt.  
 (Albert March)

#### Sarcasm

This year they've got Franz Weber with prony  
 fur to sell-  
 A bleeding heart from Switzerland who thinks  
 he's William Tell. (A. R. Scammell)

#### Incredulity

Miss Bardot do you think these furs you've worn  
 were weaved for you alone by gentle hands?  
 and do you think that steak upon your silver plate  
 was picked from off some plant that grows in France?  
 (Phoebe Bonnah)

Kenneth Goldstein distinguishes "traditional" protest from contemporary protest (and counter-protest) in the following way: traditional protest is descriptive and essentially a catalogue of what is (or was) wrong, while recent forms are appeals for action to correct inequities or disturbing circumstances.<sup>8</sup> Somewhat along the same

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Goldstein, in conversation (July 20, 1978).

lines, R. Serge Denisoff argues there are two types of persuasion or propaganda songs: magnetic and rhetorical. He suggests that magnetic songs must provide an "opportunity for social action. The song should blueprint successful alternation of existent power relationships."<sup>9</sup>

I disagree with Denisoff's second category, "a rhetorical song written by a folk entrepreneur...designed to point to some social condition, describe the condition, but offers no ideological or organizational solution."<sup>10</sup>

Although he acknowledges the capacity of rhetorical songs to be "endemic to specific geographical and historical contexts," his assumption that such songs do not attempt to elicit audience commitment is unsubstantiated. I, too, describe such songs as "outbursts of desperation," but they are not "simply" emotional expressions. When such sentiments are publicly shared, I would argue they are "problem-solving devices" as well as pleas for "mobilization of action," support, or both.

Another approach is to view all counter-protest verses as rhetorical appeals, the discriminating feature being tone rather than function. Considering the sealing controversy as the historical event within a broader cultural context, analysis of counter-protest rhetoric suggests its own typology. Celebratory/condemning verses

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<sup>9</sup> R. Serge Denisoff, Sing A Song of Social Significance (Bowling Green: Popular Press, 1972), pp. 60-61.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

being the most rigid and defensive in tone, while verses of sympathy and reproach move towards rationalization and justification. Facetious/satirical verses serve several attitudes--they express hostility in a socially-acceptable way, and they also suggest a playful attitude towards the protesters. By refusing to recognize the protest as a serious threat, they assert and maintain control over an otherwise disturbing situation.

Like gossip, satirical songs are a private view of affairs of public interest, loaded with special pleading. Unlike gossip, on the other hand, they make public a private assessment of a situation in a candid manner that only a song can do. The satirical songmaker walks the thin line between amusement and libel.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, as previously noted, few counter-protest verse-makers elected to express their sentiments through satire, and I suggested the explanation resides with the fact that most Newfoundlanders could not remove themselves sufficiently from the emotionalism of the issue to compose a satirical verse. Even Angus Lane's "Green Peace or the Wearin' O' the Green," which ends with a facetious remark about spraying Brian Davies green, is prefaced with a sober admonishment: "Man should not fool with nature's ways... God's plans we should not tamper with, nor should we doubt their source."

Metaphors, like stereotypes, have an abridgment

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<sup>11</sup> John F. Szwed, "Paul E. Hall: A Newfoundland Song-Maker and His Community of Song," Folksongs and Their Makers ed. Henry Glassie, Edward Ives, and John F. Szwed (Bowling Green: University Press, 1975), p. 156.

capacity in that they permit a certain "economy of thought." Counter-protest expressions are laden with stereotypes and metaphoric images. As Brenda Beck argues, "metaphors need not always have a verbal form" and "the essential nature of the metaphor then, is that it juxtaposes elements of a concrete image in order to formulate some set of more abstract relationships."<sup>12</sup>

The very image of a whitecoat and/or sealers evokes a reaction among Newfoundlanders and anyone familiar with the protest context. Such "metaphors" are intimately related to world view and subsequent expressive behavior.

The mental set shared by group members must continually adapt to changing ecological, economic, and social conditions. Gradually the common code is forced to adjust to a new environment. The metaphor is one of the simplest mechanisms by which such a shared mental framework can be kept in touch with what lies "out there." By studying the use of metaphors and their shifting content, we can monitor that very central process of adjustment which any cultural code must undergo when faced with a changing environment. Through recording metaphors in the context of their use, we can literally come to "see" that process at the very moment of its occurrence.<sup>13</sup>

In effect, my thesis is an effort to monitor that adjustment process, for the protest has brought about numerous changes since the late 1950's. Sealers are required to be licensed, their equipment must conform to standard

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<sup>12</sup> Brenda B.F. Beck, "The Metaphor as a Mediator Between Semantic and Analogic Modes of Thought," Current Anthropology 19 (March, 1978), p. 83.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

measurements, while killing and skinning methods are proscribed by law. Quotas are strictly enforced, and ship captains must abide by regulations enacted in Ottawa. In addition, changes in ownership of the sealing vessels and processing plants have necessitated economic as well as social adjustment.

Fewer Newfoundlanders go to the ice each March, yet sealing retains metaphorical capacities. In former times, songs and stories about the hunt were records of triumphs and disasters, adventure and fellowship, but contemporary expressions are quite different. I attribute this to the protest and subsequent regulation for in the last decade, Newfoundlanders have been forced to justify and rationalize the legitimacy of sealing. When an ordinary annual activity becomes the subject of intense publicity and criticism, the participants and supporting culture must articulate its defense. In the Newfoundland example the controversy was waged rhetorically, with protesters and counter-protesters arguing for public commitment and action.

Protesters sought to bring international pressure on the Canadian government to stop the hunt, or at least to impose a lengthy moratorium while further research on the harp seal was conducted. Some encouraged a boycott on all seal fur products. The audience was external, although media lip-service was paid to the Newfoundland

public by Greenpeace, who paid for a full-page ad in the St. John's Evening Telegram (1978): "While we can both still hear and think, we would like to present our case to you--the people most directly involved in this issue--and invite you to speak to us."<sup>14</sup> Brian Davies claimed "If we're successful in ending the ship hunt (for seals) it is not my intention to interfere with the landmen's seal hunt,"<sup>15</sup> but most of his appeals failed to discriminate between the two activities.

Ostensibly, counter-protest was directed at critics, i.e., an external audience, but most used local and provincial media as expressive channels. The message functioned principally to promote solidarity as well as to recruit sympathetic support from that sector of the public who had remained passive and silent while the protest gained momentum. A new era in the sealing controversy began in 1978, for it was the first year counter-protest was organized at official as well as informal levels. Despite the fact that government and other authoritative agencies were available to argue a pro-sealing cause, the topic still remained vital among the general public. Notably, few counter-protest verses incorporated "official" arguments, but continued to rely on personal testimony or "knowledge" to substantiate their opinions.

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<sup>14</sup> Evening Telegram (March 9, 1978), p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> Timmins (Ontario) Daily Press (December 1, 1977).



It remains to be seen how much longer the theme of counter-protest finds expression in Newfoundland. Whether any of the songs or verses in this collection are reprinted or performed in succeeding years may not be particularly valid criteria for interpreting their significance. What I have argued, and hope to have demonstrated is that counter-protest is specific to particular people, times, and places. Preferred expressive channels, rhetorical strategies, and argument-content is likely to reveal information about shared social, historical, and geographical experiences of a group of people who find their identity and existence threatened by protesters with conflicting interests. If we believe that patterned expressive behavior provides insight to the world-view of a culture, then counter-protest is another critical theme which requires investigation.

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Photograph 4, Len Rich, Western Star (1978).

APPENDIX 1

## QUESTIONNAIRE AND SUMMARY

1. Do you write verses about other subjects? Have you ever published any of your work?
  - Bonnah- yes; for twenty years; "everything that interests me; unpublished.
  - Butler- yes (see letter, Chapter 5).
  - Collins- yes, on a daily basis, "Rhymes of the Times," for seven years.
  - Goobie- no; "just interested in this topic."
  - Hiscock- yes, since the fifth grade; one published.
  - Lane- yes, since boyhood; mostly satire; published previously.
  - Larson- yes, on many other subjects; unpublished.
  - MacIsaac- yes, since childhood, on a variety of subjects; published.
  - March- yes, for eight years- history, "stories I have heard," unpublished.
  - Mentions- yes, for thirty-five years, about "anything that appeals to me;" unpublished previously- this was a "protest to the protesters."
  - Mercer- yes; since early teens; children's stories; published.
  - Sheardown- one other poem, on the occasion of the birth of my daughter; "it was a good way to express my view from coast to coast (CBC Morning Side show).
  
2. Why do you compose verses?
  - Bonnah- personal satisfaction.
  - Butler- see letter, chapter 5.
  - Goobie- personal satisfaction.
  - Hiscock- "I work out my frustration on paper."
  - Lane- personal satisfaction and friends.
  - Larson- "to keep bittersweet memories fresh."
  - MacIsaac- "there are some things only a poem can justify!"
  - March- personal satisfaction.
  - Mentions- personal satisfaction.
  - Mercer- "I see humor in most things...I am a dreamer."
  - Pitts- "to express my opinions."
  - Sheardown- for family and friends.
  
3. What kinds of response do you receive about your verse-making?
  - Bonnah- no response outside my family.
  - Butler- friends compliment me, some people call.
  - Goobie- compliments on my skill as a verse-maker.
  - Hiscock- few people outside my family know about it; I received most of my recognition while still in



high school.

Lane- yes, they like my satirical verses.

Larson- good; some ask for copies.

MacIsaac- good response from family, friends, and school children.

March- yes, some have asked for copies and have said I have skill as a verse-maker.

Mentions- sometimes people ask for copies.

Mercer- my children's stories have been taped and played in British schools.

Pitts- yes, published in the Newfoundland Herald with a small payment for the effort.

Sheardown- family compliments.

4. Do you anyone who has been to the ice?

Bonnah- brother, friends, and other relatives.

Butler- acquainted with Cecil Mouland, survivor of the 1914 Newfoundland disaster.

Goobie- 3 springs personally and father went.

Hiscock- no.

Lane- no.

Larson- no, although acquainted with a few landsmen.

MacIsaac- grandfather.

March- no; after reading Death on the Ice, I felt sorry for seal hunters, for what they went through and what they are going through now.

Mentions- I did several years ago; my father and brother went as well.

Mercer- no.

Pitts- no.

Sheardown- no.

5. Why do you think Greenpeace and Brian Davies have chosen to protest the hunt?

Bonnah- protesters' concern for the seals, however misguided, is commendable. If monetary gain is the motive, the organizations should be attacked and disbanded. Protesters can accomplish awareness to the fact the seal must not be over-harvested.

Butler- for their own cause--money-making.

Goobie- they could make plenty of money if they got the seal fishery closed and their own factories working imitation fur.

Hiscock- mostly for themselves.

Lane- as a means of making money.

Larson- no logical reason...public unrest.

MacIsaac- the protest is lucrative.

March- the majority are trying to gain public recognition.

Menchions- they protest the hunt for personal gain; they can get a fat and easy living by their protesting.

Mercer- it could be the beautiful soulful brown eyes of the whitecoat which touched their heart, or publicity; or money and profits.

Pitts- money and profits.

6. How would you describe the protesters?

Bonnah- "protesters are concerned citizens of the world; misinformed and out of touch with the realities of the hunt."

Goobie- "stupid to try to stop Newfoundlanders from killing seals."

Hiscock- "sensationalists; they may have been taken in by others and know very little about what is really happening."

Lane- "unemployed--they don't want to work and are seeking publicity."

Larson- "assholes."

MacIsaac- "out for themselves."

March- "people looking for attention."

Menchions- "they are not really protesters."

Mercer- "I am shocked and disgusted with the way this infamy has grown all out of proportion."

7. Is the future of the seal hunt threatened by protesters?

Bonnah- possibly; with over-population of the herds, the seal will become a nuisance to the fishery.

Butler- it depends upon the markets and federal restrictions.

Collins- they have not influenced those who harvest seals for a livelihood, or those who seek adventure. They may have enough emotional support to affect the sealskin market.

Goobie- no.

Hiscock- definitely threatened.

Lane- not at all.

Larson- no.

Menchions- no, eventually people will see what these people are up to.

Mercer- (yes); it will be too late after the seal hunt is banned or if all the markets are closed.

Pitts- yes, they could close down the industry.

Sheardown- yes, because they play on the emotions of people like my friend who now regard the baby seal as something akin to the human baby.

8. What should Newfoundlanders do to defend the hunt?

Bonnah- fight propaganda with propaganda.

Butler- protesters and journalists should not be allowed to view the hunt.

Goobie- get more Newfies interested in it.

Hiscock- perhaps form groups and visit other countries and point out the cruelties that exist among them.

Lane- ignore the protesters.

Larson- continue with tradition.

MacIsaac- "As stood our fathers so we stand."

March- Newfoundlanders should keep cameramen off the ice.

Menchions- encourage people to hunt seals and ignore the protesters.

Mercer- I don't know, short of throwing all the protesters in jail.

Sheardown- yes, I was encouraged when this Spring (1978) a large number of people turned out to see the sealers off in the traditional way. I think films concentrating on sealers and their families and their way of life would force outsiders to look at the other side of the story.

9. Do you think Newfoundlanders are sufficiently concerned about the future of the seal hunt?

Bonnah- more than ever before, thanks to all the publicity.

Butler- yes, but self-defense won't change too many notions now conceived of by people who respect animal pups more than little babies.

Collins- yes, the involvement of the government, the strong home support and the manner in which the provoked sealers have kept their composure are positive elements.

Goobie- greater efforts should be made.

Hiscock- yes, but we may be too late.

Lane- the government succeeded in my opinion.

Larson- yes.

MacIsaac- greater efforts are needed; better boundary laws.

March- yes, but more should be done.

Menchions- yes.

Mercer- Newfoundlanders should resort to more drastic measures. I feel they are not paying enough heed to the far-reaching reality of the campaign.

10. Are your verses intended as commentary about the existing situation?

Bonnah- yes.

Butler- I wrote those verses to strengthen and support Newfoundlanders' stand in its defense, and for the enjoyment I get in knowing I have helped.

Goobie- commentary.

Hiscock- commentary, and I also hoped to arouse the interest of others...most people are much too placid about things that really concern them.

Lane- written for fun.

MacIsaac- they are a rallying cry to others; some good Newfoundland seal hunt songs are needed, also stories and plays.

March- commentary, but also as an attempt to interest others to participate in countering the protest.

Menchions- they are just expressions of the way I feel.

Mercer- if I feel strongly enough about a subject, I submit it for publication in the hopes it will do some good.

Sheardown- I had hoped to make people think about the seal hunt as a way of life and to point out to others that Newfoundland sealers were neither cruel or unfeeling men, but rather a breed of brave, hard-working and proud men.

11. Have you expressed your concern in any other way?

Most informants replied they had discussed the situation with family and friends. Mary MacIsaac also sent a letter to the editor of the Toronto Star, and Elizabeth Sheardown sent her poem to the CBC Morning Side (radio program) poetry contest.

APPENDIX 2

P E R M I T

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Pursuant to subsections 12(5) and 12(6) of the Seal Protection Regulations, permission is hereby granted to

Cynthia Lamson

208 Cartier

St. John's

Occupation: Graduate Student

to approach within one-half of a nautical mile of any area in which a seal hunt is being carried out, subject to the following terms and conditions.

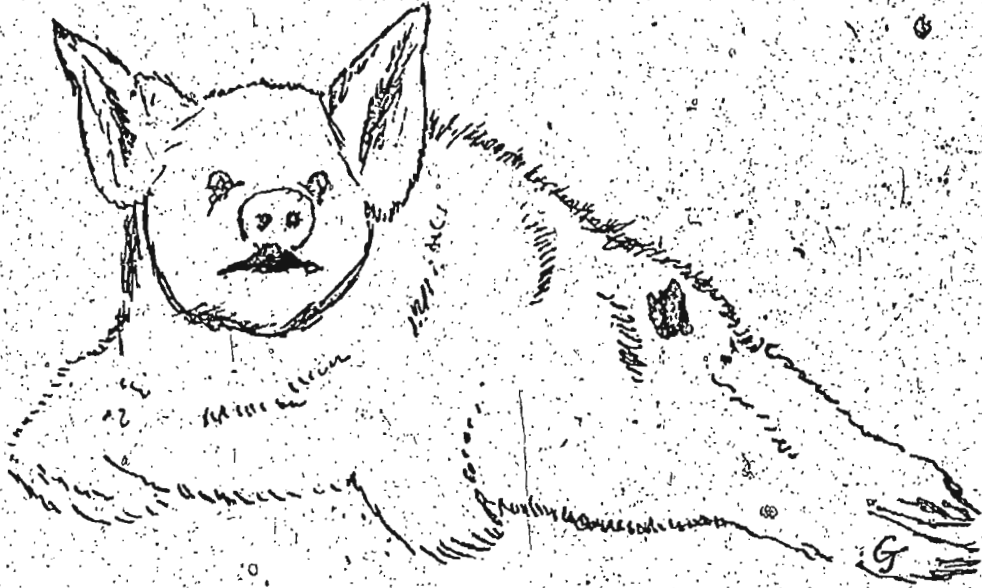
1. This permit is valid from March 10 to March 15, 1978, for the Front Area only.
2. Transportation to and from the area of the hunt shall be by means of helicopter \_\_\_\_\_ and the helicopter is permitted to land within one-half of a nautical mile of any seal on the ice and fly over seals on the ice at an altitude of less than 2,000 feet.
3. A Fishery Officer must be onboard all helicopter flights authorized by this permit.
4. This permit shall be produced for examination upon the request of an enforcement officer.
5. Persons covered by this permit shall not interfere with seals or the sealing operations.
6. Non-compliance with the terms and conditions of this permit shall immediately render it null and void.

Dated at St. Anthony this 9th day of March

1978.

Countersigned by W.D. Davis  
for Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture

APPENDIX 3



Let's be honest

It really does make a difference

(Reprinted with permission, St. John's Jaycees)









