

# The New Right, Gender and the Fisheries Crisis: Local and Global Dimensions

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## ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the social impacts of the Atlantic fisheries crisis, the ways those impacts are being mediated by New Right policy initiatives, and the gendered outcomes of these processes. Greater involvement of women in decision-making could contribute to building a more socially and ecologically sustainable relationship with our marine resources.

## RÉSUMÉ

Cet exposé discute de l'impact social de la crise des pêcheries de l'Atlantique, de la façon dont les initiatives de la politique de la Nouvelle droite font face à ces impacts, et les résultats de ces processus basés sur le sexe. Une plus grande participation des femmes aux prises de décisions contribuerait à établir une relation que l'ont pourrait maintenir avec nos ressources marines socialement et écologiquement.

## INTRODUCTION

It is well known that thousands of Atlantic Canadians have been displaced, and hundreds of rural fishing communities decimated by the collapse of most Atlantic Canadian cod and other groundfish stocks in the 1990s. Less well known is how the social impacts of these collapses are being mediated by New Right policies, by the gendered dynamics of the crisis, and by the links between local and global restructuring in fisheries. This paper elaborates on these issues. The first section links the fishery crisis to New Right policies in Canada which are described in more detail elsewhere in this issue. The second examines the impact of the fishery crisis, and these policies, on gender relations. The third section links these regional impacts to global trends. We will argue that, locally and globally, an *ecological revolution* (Merchant, 1989) is changing marine ecosystems, fisheries resources, the way production is organized and the use of marine resources for subsistence. Policies, laws and customs concerning fisheries are being altered in Atlantic Canada and worldwide. The outcomes of this ecological revolution are being mediated by New Right politics: marine areas and fisheries are being privatized, and structural adjustment programs and trade agreements are encouraging a more intensive exploitation of fish

resources. This is made possible through the transfer of western industrial technologies, fisheries science and management strategies to other parts of the world. Destruction of wild fish stocks, combined with increasing market demand for fish commodities, are encouraging the rapid development of aquaculture. This will further transform marine ecosystems, property relations, production, household and community reproduction and the laws and customs which govern fisheries. The outcomes of this revolution will be gendered and they will be uneven. Where outcomes are strongly influenced by the New Right agenda, those with tenuous access to fisheries wealth and limited alternatives, including women, children and the poor, will have even less access in the future. The fisheries crisis in Atlantic Canada has displaced thousands of workers and their families, the collapse of wild fisheries and development of aquaculture at a global level are displacing millions.

## THE ATLANTIC FISHERIES CRISIS AND THE NEW RIGHT AGENDA

The effects of overfishing during the 1980s, perhaps heightened by oceanographic changes, forced fishery closures in Atlantic Canada in the 1990s (Hutchings and Myers, 1995). A moratorium on northern cod was imposed in 1992, and other

closures followed in 1993. In Atlantic Canada as a whole, over 50,000 people working in the industry were affected. An estimated 47,000 others in fishery-dependent sectors such as trucking and retail sales also lost their livelihoods. The Canadian government set up adjustment programs costing over \$2 billion. By late 1995, 39,778 people in the region had been accepted for these programs. Those indirectly dependent on the industry were not eligible. The closures have affected entire communities and regions where groundfish was the economic mainstay. The crisis has been most acute in Newfoundland and Labrador, where over 35,000 fishery workers have been laid off (Williams, 1996).

In Atlantic Canada, fish resources and harvesting are a federal government responsibility, while processing is the responsibility of provincial governments. The federal response to the fishery crisis has been consistent with the New Right Agenda, and there has been little opposition to this approach from provincial governments in the region. From the perspective of New Right politics, the origins of the fisheries crisis are to be found in "too many fishermen chasing too few fish." The excess of fishery workers is blamed on overly generous social programmes and a failure of political will--in other words, too much democracy. From this perspective, state intervention in the economy caused unemployment by discouraging outmigration and inflating wages, and political pressure from unemployed and underemployed people prompted federal and provincial governments to use the fishery as an "employer of last resort." Generous unemployment insurance benefits interfered with the effective operation of the market and had a corrosive effect on the "traditional self-reliance" of rural communities (May and Hollett, 1995). The result was "overcapacity" in fishing and processing. The New Right solution to the problem of "too many fishermen chasing too few fish" is to cut social support programs, limit access to and eventually privatize fishery resources, and transfer responsibility for scientific research and management from government to the private sector. Reliance on market forces and a conservation ethic supposedly associated with property ownership will, it is argued, produce a

smaller, sustainable and efficient industry. (Fisheries Council of Canada, 1994).

New Right advocates overstate the extent of democratic decision-making within the fishing industry (Felt, Neis and McCay, forthcoming) and understate the contribution of government mismanagement, corporations and competitive capitalism to the fishery crisis. In the 1980s, the federal government consulted with the representatives of fishers and with industry but fishers were fragmented between many different committees and women fishers and plantworkers in particular had little opportunity to influence policy (MacInnes and Davis, 1992). In 1977, with the extension of the 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone, the federal government assumed responsibility for ensuring the recovery of depleted fish stocks. Their claim to this responsibility was based on a false set of technoutopian beliefs about the marine ecosystem and the potential of science-based management. The outcome was consistent over-estimation of stock abundance resulting in overfishing in the 1980s (Finlayson, 1994).

In 1992, the federal government acknowledged the existence of a fisheries crisis that had been affecting the industry for several years. As stocks were overfished, more money had been invested in fishing gear and vessels in order to catch the same amount of fish, to fish further afield and to fish for new species, exacerbating the problem of overcapacity (Neis et al., 1996). As the uncertainty of fishing incomes increased, so did reliance on unemployment insurance, particularly in small boat enterprises. When net income from these enterprises could no longer support multiple households, they tended to fragment and rely more on family members (including wives) as crew, bringing new entrants into the fishery (Larkin, 1990). This strategy helped them keep the fishing income and related unemployment insurance within the household. As competition for the resource increased due to shortages, processors built more plants in new locations and existing plants operated for shorter periods, augmenting the excess capacity in the industry. As work became less certain, more household members had to find work to supplement incomes.

The New Right defines overcapacity almost exclusively in terms of the number of individuals and plants in the industry. This obscures the dramatic differences in catching and processing capacity in different sectors, and differences in the amount of fish required to sustain enterprises in the labour-intensive inshore sector as opposed to the capital- and energy-intensive midshore and (corporate-owned) offshore sectors. Sectors also varied in terms of the options available to them to respond to the deepening resource crisis. The inshore sector was experiencing lower landings of groundfish and increasing fishing costs as early as the mid-1980s in many areas (Blackwood, 1996; Neis et al., 1996). The mobile, corporate fishing sector and under 65 foot midshore fleet were also affected by resource decline but somewhat differently due to their high capital costs, and somewhat later where they had privileged access to certain high value species and greater fishing capacity and mobility (Davis, 1991; Palmer, 1992). Processors were able to obtain more leverage over prices to fishers and wages for plant workers by owning several plants in different communities, owning or controlling some large vessels, by encouraging new entrants, and by refusing to purchase catch only from *bona fide* fishers. Some used their control over access to UI to discourage unionization, keep wages and fish prices low, and subsidize their operations. This pattern was particularly strong in the inshore sector where female workers were concentrated. Because they are concentrated in the seasonal inshore sector and in a narrow range of jobs directly dependent on supplies of fish, female fishers and processing workers appear to have experienced the greatest constraints when attempting to maintain their incomes and job security in the face of resource decline (Rowe, 1991).

New Right explanations and solutions also neglect the role of global factors in the development of the crisis in the Atlantic fishery. Overfishing occurred not only in this region, but throughout the North Atlantic, and in many other parts of the world. As in other resource-based industries, fisheries industries were sacrificing the incomes of future generations by overharvesting in the present and in the process, depressing prices in international

markets. Low prices probably increased the pressure on Atlantic fishers and companies to intensify production.

The New Right agenda obscures the issues of intergenerational equity and equity within the current generation that are fundamental to the development of sustainable fisheries (Boyce, 1995). It neglects the potential negative impacts of cuts to social programs and privatization of the resource on fishery communities and on the resource itself. A focus on the number of individuals in the industry, and the number of processing plants, draws our attention away from some fundamental questions. For example, how much wealth would a well-managed fishery in this region be capable of producing? How can the resources and the wealth they produce be sustained over several generations? Where should that wealth end up? What would be the best way to harvest, process and market these resources? From the perspective of the New Right, the answer to these questions is simple: let the market decide. However, the market places no value on the preservation of natural resources, unpaid labour and social equity (Waring, 1988). It is thus not surprising the New Right agenda is not good news for either women in the Atlantic fishing industry or fishery resources themselves. In the words of Marjorie Cohen, "[w]omen have long recognized that when markets are left alone, and business is left to pursue profits any way it wants, things do not turn out well for us....Our experience is that justice and fairness have to be imposed on the market: they cannot be left to chance" (1991:2).

The next section examines the gender dimensions of the Atlantic fishery crisis and the New Right response. It draws on academic literature, information from regional workshops with women in fishery communities and related newsletters (Nova Scotia Women's FishNet News; Robbins, 1995) and a review of the impact of the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery crisis on women (Williams, 1996). Proponents of the New Right agenda in the fisheries do not acknowledge either the way their policies perpetuate gender differences in access to resources, incomes and participation in decision-making about the fishery, or how their policies could contribute to

further resource decline.

### **GENDERED IMPACTS OF THE FISHERIES CRISIS AND "ADJUSTMENT" INITIATIVES**

Before the closures, there were 15,000 women working in the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery, making up about one-third of the fishery labour force. They were equally important in the fisheries of the Maritime provinces. In Newfoundland and Labrador, women held half of the processing jobs, working on fish lines, in clerical jobs and in plant management. About 12 percent of the province's fishers were women with full-time or part-time fishing licences, working as crewmembers in family vessels or on their own. About 12,000 women lost jobs in the industry. The crisis also affected women doing unpaid work in their husbands' fishing enterprises, such as bookkeeping, supplying and cooking for crews. Other women lost work in child care and the retail sector in fishery-dependent communities. In addition, outmigration and government cutbacks are reducing the number of women employed in education, health and social services (Williams, 1996).

Women with children are bearing much of the stress of the moratoria associated with loss of work, self-esteem, income and the capacity to plan for the future. They are often responsible for managing household accounts and, since the crisis, have had to manage with less money. In their role as tension managers, some feel that they cannot show their own distress because this would prove too much for other family members (Brookes, 1993). In offshore fishing households, women who were used to prolonged male absence and relative independence, have experienced adjustment difficulties: "His frustration at not working and his loss of self-esteem combined with her frustration over the erosion of her autonomy can lead to an unbearable tension between the couple" (Binkley, 1995:93). None of these outcomes are evident in the system of accounting that has guided government response to the crisis. Patriarchal assumptions have informed relevant accounts. Media reports, cultural events and government reports related to the crisis

have tended to highlight its significance for fishermen, fish companies and financially-strapped governments (Robbins forthcoming; Robinson 1995) Where women are mentioned in most mainstream sources, they are "revered as mothers, wives ...[but rarely] as co-workers" (Robinson 1995:22).

In some analyses of the crisis, women have been indirectly blamed for the slow pace of industrialization in the inshore fishery and for the increase in fisheries-related employment in the 1980s. For example, official statistics show a greater participation by women in the fishery since the 1960s. This is seen as one indicator of Newfoundland's dependence on the fishery to bolster the economy and on UI to support an inflated labour force (Carter 1993). However, the figures on increasing numbers of women working in the industry are misleading, because they would have excluded women who processed fish at the household level in the 1950s and 1960s. As women went to work in the formal sector for wages, they were counted as workers for the first time. This analysis also obscures the role of stock declines, limited employment alternatives and increases in the cost of living, all of which led to a greater reliance on UI and an influx of women and young people into the fishing industry in the 1980s. In addition, it overlooks the sexist state and corporate policies that limited women's involvement in the fishery until these were challenged in the 1970s and 1980s (McCay, 1988; Neis, 1993). As in other parts of Canada, a higher cost of living pushed women and older children to enter the paid labour force, and enjoyment of the work, as well as successful struggles to remove barriers to more equal participation pulled women into plants and onto fishing vessels. Declining catches meant that fishing costs increased in relation to the volume and value of landings. This encouraged fishery-dependent households to look for ways to keep fishing incomes in the household, and to augment individual incomes with those of other family members.

Patriarchal assumptions have also played a role in shaping the adjustment mechanisms established in response to the fisheries crisis. Examination of the report of the Task Force on

Incomes and Adjustment in the Atlantic Fishery, which provided a blueprint for government response to the crisis, illustrates this point. This Task Force was established in 1992, to "advise on the continued supply of the resource, the future stability and profitability of the industry, the achievement of stable and adequate incomes for those who make a living in the fishery, and alternative training, employment and other adjustment possibilities" (1993:109). Women are explicitly mentioned in only one of the 42 recommendations of the Task Force report. In Recommendation 23, we are told:

Women's role as the binding force in the fishing community will be essential to the adjustment process. Their participation in the process should be specifically recognized and planned in any adjustment program, using existing fisheries organizations wherever possible (1993: 102).

A brief section of the Task Force report acknowledged the existence of historical barriers to women's entry into fishing, but there were no recommendations for action to ensure that "adjustment" programs would not reinforce these barriers or create new ones for women who wanted to fish.

The more than \$2 billion price tag of adjustment programs providing income support to displaced fishery workers would appear to be inconsistent with the New Right commitment to state debt reduction and reduced state involvement in the economy. However, whereas fishery workers have tended to define the bi-weekly benefits as compensation for lost income caused by government mismanagement of the fishery, the government has defined these as part of a larger set of programs and policies to help fishery workers "adjust" to a downsized fishery through retraining, outmigration and early retirement. The government also defined the fishery crisis as affecting only certain individuals who could meet the specific eligibility criteria for its adjustment programs. These criteria did not attempt to mitigate the effects of a history of practices and

programs that had limited women's independent access to fishery-generated wealth. Women fishers have had greater difficulty qualifying for adjustment payments and programs, because of male norms for what is considered fishing work, and because of the longer and more stable male involvement in fishing. Negative attitudes on the part of some fisheries officers, and some male fishers, may also have played a role (Williams, 1996). Because they were ineligible for government income support or training programs, those who had to adjust most quickly were the young people who had worked in the industry or planned to work in the industry, and those whose employment was indirectly dependent on the fishery, such as service sector workers. Many of these workers are women. Some have left their communities and those who remain may account for some of the growing number of Atlantic Canadians on social assistance.

Financial compensation for fishers and plant workers under the "adjustment" programs has been based on previous work patterns and income levels. The Task Force report acknowledged that women's average wage in fish processing had been lower than men's, but it made no recommendation to stop government from reproducing this inequity in its adjustment programs. Because benefits and eligibility for programs have been based on "historical attachment" to the industry and pre-moratoria fisheries incomes, adjustment programs have replicated the gendered income inequalities created by a history of male dominance within the industry. These have been supported to some extent by sexist welfare state programs and fisheries management policies (Neis, 1993). Women have received lower average compensation rates and most were scheduled to be removed from the program earlier than men (Williams, 1996).<sup>1</sup>

Fishery workers who were eligible for adjustment programs were initially required to seek training or risk the loss of their weekly benefits. They were led to believe that those who trained outside the fishery would not be able to return to the industry in the future. Women make up about 50 percent of the plant labour force in Newfoundland and Labrador. They are concentrated in low-wage processing jobs, with limited chances to get ahead

and with food-processing skills that are not easily transferable to other occupations. Training for occupations outside the fishery has been the main emphasis of adjustment programs for processing workers. There are few occupational alternatives to the fishery in rural areas. Retraining for non-fishery jobs has meant moving to cities to look for work. People have been reluctant to leave their communities and to abandon the industry which has been the centre of their work and community lives. Women in their middle years are often tied to their communities by the needs of children, husbands, the elderly and the disabled who depend on them for care. Recent research describes middle generation women as "trapped" in their communities by the fishery crisis (Davis 1995). These women are caught in a "circular trap which revolves *through* the household," forcing them to "commit untold effort to ensuring the survival of the household, because without it, their position as women outside households or women in women-headed households would be, in most cases, economically pitiful" (Porter 1993:148).

Women fishers and plant workers had little say in the design of re-training programs. Those on the adjustment programs reported frustration with the available training opportunities. They feel that they have had little help in determining what kind of training will lead to successful employment, or self-employment, in their communities (Educational Planning, 1994; FFAW/CAW, 1994; Robbins, 1995). Not surprisingly, women have called for training to be linked to community economic development that is based, in part, on diversification around the fishery. Instead, many have been steered into areas of training where the labour market is already saturated, often because it was the most convenient type of training to offer (Williams, 1996).

The fishery "adjustment" training programs have temporarily supported fishers and plant workers who would otherwise have looked for UI-funded training programs and publicly-funded adult basic education (ABE) in community colleges. Recent cuts to community college funding perhaps partly prompted by the Canada Health and Social Transfer, will limit the training options available to these and other workers in the future. The Canada Health and

Social Transfer, another federal New Right initiative, is reducing transfer payments to provincial governments for health, post-secondary education and social assistance. The cost of post-secondary education is rising as a result, at a time when most fishery families have fewer resources to get the training which they and their children need. New and returning entrants to the labour force, such as young people and single mothers, will have more difficulty getting affordable, publicly-funded training in the future. Chronic unemployment and low incomes are reducing the ability of these households to generate enough revenue to help the next generation escape poverty through post-secondary education or employment elsewhere. Young women who are committed to leaving may find themselves depending on scarce family resources to do so (Davis 1995).

Changes to unemployment insurance regulations will also limit the educational and financial options of fishery households in the future. Although the unemployment insurance fund is currently running a multi-billion dollar surplus (partly because of the transfer of fishery workers to adjustment programs), the federal government has introduced cuts and changes to unemployment insurance (UI) that will target seasonal workers. A theory of UI dependency, which accuses seasonal workers, small-scale fishers, women and youth of overusing the program, combined with a public relations strategy emphasizing the high incomes of a few fishermen who qualify for UI, has helped to create the climate for cuts and allowed the federal government to ignore regional opposition. It has been estimated that the UI reforms will remove \$105 million a year from the Newfoundland and Labrador economy alone (*Union Advocate*, 1996:8).

The UI reforms include increases in the period of time needed to qualify, reductions in the duration of benefits and access to training, and measures to penalize seasonal users of the program. Under the new regulations introduced in 1996, benefits are based on hours worked, instead of weeks, and the hours are divided over more weeks, including weeks with very few hours of work. Seasonal workers, and others who draw more than 20 weeks of benefits over a five-year period, will see their benefits

reduced by one percent for every 20 weeks drawn, down to 50 percent of their former wage. They will also have a lower income ceiling for clawbacks. The clawback provision will mean that some workers who pay into UI and meet other requirements will be ineligible for benefits, eroding universality of access and public support for the program (Government of Canada, 1996; *Union Advocate*, 1996; Williams, 1996).

All applicants, but especially new entrants, will find it more difficult to qualify in future. Fishery workers who have not found enough work during the moratoria to qualify for UI, and who have thus depended on the "adjustment" program, will be classified as new entrants to the labour force when their payments end (Earl McCurdy, *CBC Fisheries Broadcast*, December 1996). Many of these workers will be forced to leave the region. Limited access to UI will add to the pressure on government to re-open fisheries. Higher UI eligibility requirements will contribute to more intense competition for the limited work available.

Cuts to UI, and changes in eligibility criteria for UI and government-sponsored training, will affect women differently than men. The rules permitting fishermen's wives and children to qualify for UI--the "arm's length policy"--are being tightened. In the past, it was only necessary for women to be involved in catching fish, and to show that if the family member was not employed, someone else would be hired at the same wage and under the same conditions. It is now necessary to show that the family member is paid on a regular basis at a "reasonable" rate, and that she has a proper workspace in the home (Bay St. Lawrence Women's FishNet, 1996:3; DesRoches and Lord, 1996:11). Similar requirements to show "arms length" and earnings at a "reasonable" rate are restricting benefits paid to child care workers who are related to their employers. Moreover, women who do shore work for fishing enterprises, such as unloading and net mending, are still not eligible for fisher's UI because they are not in the boat.

New Right policies are not only limiting resources for the poor, but also shifting social responsibilities from the state to the family.

Consistent with this is the introduction of a system of eligibility for some UI-recipients based on household, as opposed to individual incomes. On the positive side, households with incomes of \$26,000 or less will be exempted from the frequent user penalties. But the use of household income as a determinant of benefits is a major departure for a government agency whose mandate has always been employment-related. In the future, cuts and penalties could be imposed on the basis of household income. If this happens, even small paycheques from working wives could result in UI penalties, if these push household incomes above a ceiling. It could leave lower-income, seasonally-employed women plant workers and fishers ineligible for UI if their spouses are better paid. The household-based approach to income support assumes that women will have access to their husbands' incomes to meet the needs of their children and themselves, which may not be the case. Working wives and mothers will lose a crucial margin of independence and financial security under such a system and many households with low incomes will be poorer still in the future.

The New Right rationale for dismantling national social programs is that they are over-regulated and inflexible (HRDC, 1994). Decentralization would seem to make sense if programs become more democratic and responsive to regional needs. But the loss of national standards and accountability will have negative effects. In the past, women have made significant gains by challenging discrimination in these programs on a national level. For example, a single Supreme Court challenge could require government to change its regulation denying women who fished with their husbands access to fisher's UI. Without national standards and accountability, gender bias in social programs will be less visible, and the gains women make in one province or region may not carry over to others. Supporters of changes in the UI system have argued that UI, and the "culture of dependency" it supposedly created, were responsible for poor education levels in fishery communities. This ignores the contribution of the UI program to education and training, by making it affordable and accessible to people in fishing communities (Overton, 1996:3-4;

Osberg, 1995).

In 1996, the training requirement/option was largely dropped from the adjustment programs and the maximum period of eligibility for adjustment benefits was reduced by one year. Because the federal government refused to increase the money allocated for adjustment programs, despite closing additional fisheries and increasing the amount of people eligible for them, some cuts were required.

The adjustment programs did not recognize the crisis as one which affected entire households and communities. Multiple generations of men and women have been active in the fishery or hoped to be in the future, and the majority of fishery workers live in single-industry communities. Thus, the crisis has affected the economic status of households, communities and entire regions. The UI cuts will enhance these impacts by lowering incomes. For those unable to qualify, the cuts will tend to force them out of the fishery. The young, single and mobile, and families with prospects for work elsewhere, will leave the communities, while single mothers, semi-skilled workers, older workers and others may end up trapped in these communities, reliant on welfare. Like other Canadian households, fishery households now require multiple incomes. If wives and young people are removed from the labour force, this will result in greater poverty for these households. In fishing households, there will be greater pressure on fishermen to increase their incomes and hence their catches.

Gender bias can also be found within resource management initiatives associated with the crisis. The strict criteria of adjustment programs have divided communities based on who was eligible and who is considered by authorities to be part of the "core" fishery. Access to fishing licenses is being limited through the introduction of a professionalization program and relatively strict criteria for defining membership in a "core" fishery. Few women fishers will be eligible for "core" status because of their relatively recent entry into fishing and because of their status as part-time license holders and crew members.<sup>2</sup> Nowhere do we hear a discussion of the need for an affirmative action program to ensure women have a place in the future

"core" fishery and to ensure that "core" status does not increase women's economic dependence on their husbands.

Government initiatives are encouraging the concentration of harvesting and processing work in the hands of fewer workers and fewer communities, leaving others to seek economic development initiatives outside the fishery. The continued scarcity of groundfish, combined with overfishing of other species and cuts to the "adjustment" benefits are contributing to growing support for a more limited access fishery in the future. For example, support among fishers for dividing up the fishable resource into individual boat quotas (IQs) appears to be increasing. IQs will limit competition for the resource in the short term but there is no guarantee that they will ensure resource recovery. Small boat quotas, combined with increasing costs to vessel owners for fisheries management, higher licensing fees and more limited access to UI, will encourage overfishing and discarding as vessel owners struggle to make ends meet. As stocks and incomes decline, fishers will become interested in making these individual quotas transferable (ITQs)--a currently unpopular strategy--so that they can be sold, allowing some to exit the industry and others to increase their quota.<sup>3</sup> In other countries where individual boat quotas were introduced, these have been followed by the introduction of ITQs (Arnason and Felt 1995; Hannesson, 1996). Once quotas are transferable, individuals and corporations will buy them up and the resource will be fully privatized. ITQs have been associated with the rapid concentration of ownership of fishery resources and the elimination of the rights of crew members and their families to independent access to such resources (DeWees, 1992; Sissenwine and Mace 1992). They have also been associated with a range of ecologically destructive practices (Copes 1986, 1996a and b). The closure of many fish plants will exacerbate the trend towards greater concentration of ownership by limiting the employment options of fishing families and encouraging outmigration. The process of identifying the mechanisms that will determine the future of local fish plants is now underway. A future, larger wave of displacement from the industry and the

transformation of many communities into ghost towns or welfare ghettos could be the result.

Women fishers could lose more than fishermen from initiatives to privatize ownership of fisheries resources. In Norway, a system of IQs was introduced after a fisheries crisis in 1989. Under this change in management women ended up with only a tiny proportion of the resulting quotas, because fishing was culturally and economically a male preserve, and because women's flexible combination of shore and fishery work interfered with their eligibility for quotas (Munk-Madsen, 1996). Women fish plant workers will be profoundly affected by the process chosen for reducing the number of plants in the industry. However, no attempt has been made to ensure that they are well-represented in the decision-making processes concerning resource management and industry restructuring.

The fisheries crisis has made it easier for the federal government to pursue a decade-old agenda. In the words of John Crosbie, the federal Minister of Fisheries who announced the first moratorium in 1992, "I felt and still feel it was the opportunity for the government to change the management of the fishery" (Blades, 1996). By limiting the funding for adjustment programs on the basis of fiscal restraint, by imposing individualistic eligibility criteria that ignore the household and community basis of the industry, and by cutting social programs, the federal government is gradually forcing many current and future fishery workers out of the industry and out of fishery communities altogether. The federal government has treated the crisis with short-term programs, when in reality, fish stocks in some areas are recovering slowly and some may never recover, threatening the displacement of future generations.

A context of broad Canadian acceptance of the need for fiscal restraint and the collapse of the major fish stocks have allowed the federal government to forge ahead with these New Right initiatives. Atlantic Canadian fishery workers have not, however, been entirely passive in their response. The exodus from the industry was slow in starting. The adjustment programs provided many with some financial security and people in fishing communities were reluctant to abandon substantial investments in

homes, fishing gear and fishery-related skills. Limited work with other species, high prices and in the case of snow crab, apparent increases in abundance and wider access to this fishery helped some workers fill their empty days and supplement their adjustment income. Because their own employment *and* that of future generations was threatened, and because displaced youth were ineligible for support, some parents directed resources to supporting the training and outmigration of their children, in the hope that they would find work elsewhere. In the Maritimes, where fisheries have been less severely affected by the moratoria, increased licensing fees have prompted widespread protests, including the occupation of DFO Offices. In Newfoundland and Labrador, anger concerning the stock collapse and fears about the future have been channelled into protests about reductions in the adjustment "package" and changes to the UI program. Throughout the region, women from fishery communities have repeatedly supported attempts to limit the cuts, protect themselves and their families, and ensure the future of their communities.

As a result of this New Right program, more communities than necessary will die out. There will also be greater polarization than necessary within those communities that remain, as wealth becomes concentrated in fewer hands and men and women and parents and children compete for work and income (Davis 1995; Neis 1993).<sup>4</sup> Failure to address the social justice issues at the heart of the fishery crisis will threaten the future of the resource and the industry itself (Boyce, 1995). There is a significant risk that the groundfish stocks will never be allowed to recover to anything near their potential productivity. The displacement of fishery workers, and entire fishery communities, from parts of the Newfoundland and Labrador coast will open up these areas to corporate and individual control over new industrial development in the areas of tourism and aquaculture. Some increases in fisheries production are being achieved through aquaculture, but aquaculture also appears unlikely to employ large numbers of displaced fisheries workers. Its potential limited, particularly in northern areas, there are strong pressures towards a corporate-controlled high-

tech form of aquaculture. The development of aquaculture is part of a global restructuring of fisheries in response to resource depletion and continued high demand for fish products that will not necessarily result in the concentration of fish production in the same areas that relied on wild fisheries.

The third section of this paper looks at the New Right agenda and the gendered dynamics of the global fisheries crisis and restructuring. The analysis draws on regional and international research on gender and fisheries (Nadel-Klein and Davis, 1988; Porter, 1993) and on the impact on women of local and global changes in fisheries technologies, ownership structures, social programs and fisheries management policies (Escallier and Maneschy, 1996; Gerrard, 1995; Munk-Madsen, 1996; Nayak, 1992; Sharma, 1996; Toril Pettersen, 1996; Williams, 1996). The conceptual framework is broadly informed by feminist critiques of globalization and structural adjustment programs (Connelly et al, 1995) and by Carolyn Merchant's (1989) concept of "ecological revolutions."

### THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL

The government says it is transfer of technology. But it is a transfer of crisis from their place to ours (Mukerjee, 1996:26).

Corporate response to stock decline in Canada and other wealthy, industrialized countries, has included the search for new products and fisheries at an international level. As a result, fishing effort is shifting from countries like Canada, where stocks have collapsed, to Third World countries like Senegal and India. Since the moratorium, for example, Fishery Products International, the largest vertically-integrated Newfoundland company, has sold most of its large trawlers to countries of the south and restructured so that profits are more dependent on sourcing raw material at a global level. This pattern has also been observed in European and Asian fisheries. Overfishing and shifting effort from one area to another, and one species to another, is affecting the stock levels in marine fisheries to the

point of global crisis. It is arguable that we are witnessing a global *ecological revolution* (Merchant, 1986) in fisheries based on the transformation of nature, our productive relations to nature, the reproduction of fisheries households and communities and the dominant legal, political and ideological frameworks that govern fisheries.

New Right politics on a local and global level are mediating responses to this international fisheries crisis. Structural adjustment initiatives similar to those in Canada are cutting government spending on basic services, eliminating subsidies on basic requirements and re-directing many national economies towards export production. International trade agreements are allowing corporate investments greater freedom of movement, without social, political and ecological responsibilities to workers, consumers and their communities (Connelly et al., 1995; Woman to Woman, 1993: 3). Restructuring initiatives in fishing economies are encouraging the spread of joint ventures between rich and poor countries by pressuring debtor countries to exchange access to their fishery resources for access to foreign exchange. They are also constraining the capacity of poorer countries to limit external ownership and the export of resources, threatening local fishery employment and food self-sufficiency. Stock assessment, and fisheries management and surveillance mechanisms, are even weaker in these countries than in Canada, making it virtually impossible to prevent overfishing. Fish from these areas can be harvested and marketed cheaply due to greater abundance, lower wages and less surveillance compared to the cost of harvesting the depleted and more tightly managed stocks in the North. Fish from the countries of the South can thus help depress prices for Northern fish, despite stock depletion and higher harvesting and processing costs. This will encourage further overfishing in the countries of the North (Sharma, 1996).

Today's stocks are the ecological basis for future fisheries, as well as the economic basis for coastal communities. The globalization of fish markets and production is disrupting local harvesting and marketing networks and depriving fishery workers of fish as a source of food and income

(Fairlie et al, 1995). The population dependent on fisheries in the South is enormous in comparison to the North, and subsistence dependence is also much greater. If the fish stocks of countries like Senegal and India collapse, millions of fishery-dependent people will be displaced and left hungry.

New Right initiatives leave the fate of communities and fishery resources to the international, corporate-dominated market. Because wealth speaks louder than poverty in the market *and* in politics, these initiatives are exacerbating economic and political inequities and undermining the potential for sustainable fisheries (Boyce, 1995). The wealthy tend to benefit more than the poor from overfishing. The willingness to pay the costs associated with sustainable fishing is constrained by ability to pay, making it difficult for the poor to fish sustainably. Any initiative that proposes to create sustainable fisheries without addressing the deepening economic inequities within fishery communities and between those communities and other national regions will not be effective. In Canada, programs designed to address inequities between social classes, rich and poor regions and men and women, are being cut at a time when those vulnerable to these cuts in fishery-dependent regions are reeling from the effects of resource degradation. In Senegal, joint ventures are eroding the ecological and economic basis for artisanal fisheries encouraging fishermen to invest more intensively in fishing technology, to fish farther afield, and to sell their catches to international buyers. In India, small scale and artisanal fishery people have been struggling against joint ventures for over three years (Sharma, 1996).

As displaced workers in harvesting, as wives of displaced fishers and as members of fishery communities, women in many countries are losing access to food and employment generated from fisheries resources. Because women tend to be poorer than men and to exercise less control over natural resources and within politics globally, they appear to be suffering most from New Right initiatives. As Nayak found in her research on the fisheries of India:

Modernisation in fishing was turning

women into wage workers at the prawn peeling sheds or throwing them out of work altogether. Landings sites had begun to be monopolised by large male merchants and women lost access to fish for vending. Gradually with the depletion caused by overfishing, women had to go to distant sites to purchase fish. This added to their burden and more so because as the sector began to modernise, greater poverty hit the people. In these cases, women had and have to find all kinds of ways to keep the home fires burning. Women are also becoming greater victims of violence as men are forced to get more aggressive at sea and when this pays no dividends, come ashore to drown their sorrows with liquor and take their aggression out on their women. For all these reasons, it became more obvious that [the women activists'] fishworkers' union had to see the depletion or ecological question linked to the technology question and the question of patriarchy (1992:63).

The growing gap between wild fish supplies and market demand is encouraging the expansion of aquaculture at a global level (McGoodwin, 1990). This latter trend will probably accelerate in the future, as more wild fish stocks are overfished, as the demands of aquaculture for fishmeal and larvae expand, and as its negative impacts on coastal ecosystems increase the pressure on wild stocks and on marine ecosystems as a whole (Bailey et al., 1996). The expansion of high-technology aquaculture in many parts of the world is denying people in coastal communities access to adjacent marine resources which they have used for centuries. It is throwing fishery workers out of work, destroying the coastal breeding grounds needed by many wild species, often in order to produce luxury food items for the rich (May, 1996; Wilks, 1995). The aquaculture ecological revolution will change marine ecology, as well as human relationships to nature and to each other. Since these relations are gendered, and gender relations vary between countries, its impacts on women will be different from those on men, and

not all women will be similarly affected. However, given women's more tenuous control over resources, their greater poverty and their frequent responsibility for children and the disabled, it is likely that women will suffer most from an ecological revolution guided by a New Right agenda.

### CONCLUSION

All fishworkers tend to believe that the resource is limitless and that it is taken away from them by the mechanised boats. We haven't gone into the manner in which nature is raped and then left sterile. I personally feel that these two phenomena, the exploitation of women and the over-fishing, are very closely related and our means to combat them will therefore also be related (Nayak, 1992:54).

The New Right agenda for solving the fisheries crisis, both local and global, does not address the root causes of this crisis. A management strategy of reducing the number of players and privatizing the resource simply results in a build-up of harvesting capacity in the higher-technology fleets that remain, many of which are owned or financed by fish corporations and need to maximize their catching efficiency in order to cover costs and meet profit targets.

Limited entry, licensing, quotas and other restrictions upon human access to resources will do little to check the Tragedy of Technology as it remorselessly imposes new techniques upon technologically-saturated fisheries. Redundant technologies do nothing but threaten stocks or add to the expense of harvesting a finite resource and force more people out of the industry--denying ever-increasing numbers of people access to natural resources, making them redundant and breaking up communities (Fairlie et al, 1995:67).

The New Right agenda attempts to leave the job of maximizing the health of remaining fish stocks, their resilience and their employment potential, to the market. However, the rich have more votes in the marketplace than the poor, and ecological sustainability cannot be achieved without the elimination of economic and political inequities, including the inequities between women and men (Boyce, 1996). Because the fisheries crisis is global, women of the North must work together with those of the South to resist the New Right agenda and stop the destruction of fishery resources, fishery households and fishery communities. Women are more than the glue of fishery communities. In Atlantic Canada, as elsewhere, they contribute directly to the fishery as workers, organizers and managers, in fishery households, industries and communities. They have fishery knowledge and skills, and depend on the fish resources and industry for their livelihood. The household basis of fisheries in Atlantic Canada, Norway and many other parts of the world is well documented. Women contribute financially and organizationally to these enterprises. However, the crisis restructuring programs, and the new approaches in fisheries science and management, are rarely scrutinized for their assumptions about women's place or their impacts on women's lives and capacity to hold their communities together. If this is to change, the "[p]reservation of the coastal population and its culture must...become part of fisheries management. Nor is it sufficient to focus exclusively on the fishermen; the entire household must be economically and socially sustainable. In this, women are seen to occupy a critical role" (Toril Pettersen, 1996:247). Women's relationships to communities and to fishery resources are different from men's, and their perspectives and interests are also different, although by no means homogeneous. Greater participation by women in managing our treatment of marine areas and resources could help pave the way for a "counter-ecological revolution" in fisheries in which our wild resources remain public resources, are allowed to fully recover and, in conjunction with some forms of aquaculture, provide the basis for food security<sup>5</sup>.

## ENDNOTES

1. Because men who fished and who worked in plants were more likely than women fishery workers to qualify for the full period of benefits, the recent elimination of the last year of funding has, ironically, had the effect of reducing gender inequities in eligibility.
2. Core fishers are defined as heads of fishing enterprises, with seven years' full-time fishing experience, and with 75 percent of their earned income, or recent actual enterprise revenues of \$20,000, from fishing. They are subject to "special eligibility criteria". Less than two percent of those meeting special eligibility criteria for fishers are women (Williams, 1996: 47).
3. Western industrial fisheries are generally managed using scientific stock assessments as a basis for establishing total allowable catches (TACS). In Atlantic Canada, in the 1980s, portions of these TACS were allocated to the big companies in the form of Enterprise Allocations and other portions were allocated to some of the larger, owner-operated fishing vessel owners in the form of individual quotas (IQs) (individual portions of the TAC) and ITQs, individual portions that fisher-owners have the right to sell.
4. Recent non-fishery job creation projects, such as the Hibernia oil project, have been harder for women to access because most involve traditional men's work in construction and mining. Those women who were able to access nontraditional jobs at Hibernia were subject to high levels of workplace harassment (Grzetic et al, 1996).
5. Thanks to Gabriele Dietrich for this suggestion that we need to organize a "counter ecological revolution."

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