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**Memorial University Fishery Policy Meeting  
May 24, 2012, 9:00 am to 11:00 am  
McCann Centre, Education Building**

**In attendance**

Carey Bonnell	Jose Lam (web)	Gabriela Sabau (web)
Sean Cadigan	Art May	Edward Stern
Mike Clair (chair)	Morgan Murray (note taker)	Robert Sweeny
Reade Davis (web)	Barb Neis	Dave Vardy
Lawrence Felt	Lynne Philips	Bob Verge
Ian Fleming	George Rose	Dick Whittaker
Doug House	Sherrylynn Rowe	

**Presentations by Art May and Doug House on Fishery Policy**

**Art May, former president of Memorial University, former Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada**

What is the role of the academic in fishery policy? Former Memorial Economist Parzival Copes was an outspoken critic of fishery policy and often caught flack for it. People never want to hear possible solutions that may negatively affect them, so there is often a lot of resistance. But academic freedom allows academics the ability to speak out. Though, sometimes when they speak out, these academics will find themselves alone.

Fish is common property. This fact must be appreciated before any judgments are passed on fishery policy. But often time this leads to proving the adage: "what's everybody's property is nobody's responsibility." This is "the tragedy of the commons," a concept developed by ecologist Garrett Hardin in his 1968 [article of the same name](#).

It will always be the government's responsibility to regulate common property. However, there is a place for "non-interested" academics to provide facts to debates re: common property.

Academics commentators, however, should never impugn the motives or challenge the intelligence of policy makers. They work under a different set of circumstances, from a

different perspective, in response to different pressures and influences, and with different information. Likewise, academics work from a limited perspective as well.

The biggest policy failure in Canada in the last 50+ years has been EI for fishermen. Well-intentioned as it was, seeking to help people in need, it has had unintended consequences and incentives/disincentives, which has negatively impacted the sustainability of the industry.

Following the moratorium in 1992 Beverly Carter, a senior official of the Provincial Department of Finance, published a report on employment in the Newfoundland cod fishery and found that 70% of fishery workers had only a grade 9 education or less. Many young people had left school for work in fish plants and to collect EI. This left a major education deficit in the province following the moratorium, making it a social disaster as well. Many of these newly unemployed did not have the basic literacy skills to allow for quick retraining.

Would the effects of the moratorium be less disastrous if the fishery hadn't become the "employer of last resort" in the province?

There was also a certain amount of conflict between different levels of government, as the Federal government sought to shrink the industry, while the Province sought to grow the industry for employment sake, especially in politically significant ridings.

The cod stocks will rebound, and when they do we will be faced with a major challenge: how can we sell cod at a price that will allow for a sustainable fishery when the market is full of Norwegian and Icelandic cod? Meanwhile, shrimp and crab stocks are likely to decline significantly.

Final advice for academics looking to engage in fishery policy debates: "speak softly and carry a thick skin."

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### **Doug House, Sociology**

Dr. House presented on the topic of "Influencing fishery policy," in three distinct sections: How are policies made, the history of fishery policy since Confederation, and what is the role of the MUN Fishery Forum? Dr. House' presentation slides and notes can be seen [here](#).

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## Discussion

**Bob Verge:** The challenges faced in the industry are due to a failure of public policy, especially EI policy. Perhaps a way forward, and a way to avoid unintended consequences, would be to include psychologists in policy discussion as a means to try and understand the potential incentives and their consequences from policies before they are implemented.

**Art:** Policies are usually well-intentioned, but there remain a lot of paternalistic policies and policy perspectives, and not enough sink-or-swim policies that promote innovation and industry health.

**Doug:** The Economic Recovery Commission attempted to reform the incentives in the industries, but to no avail. Policies need to be such that work and education are rewarded.

**Art:** An example of unintended consequences: there are crab boats that employ multiple crews: once one crew has enough hours to qualify for EI they are laid off and a new crew comes on.

**Bob:** 1988 was a watershed year for EI incentive perversion. At that point it stopped being about productivity or business success, and became about employing the most possible Baby-Boomers. Now the Boomers are retiring, the issue is no longer as prevalent, and is becoming increasingly less so, yet there remains no replacement solution.

**Art:** Where is the NL trawler fleet? Opportunities are being lost to international trawler fleets.

**Doug:** EI is still a major problem that needs to be addressed to deal with perverse incentives, but there are many other problems, most of all is stock/resource management.

**Dave Vardy:** What does this committee want to be when it grows up? There has been a lot of work going on for some time to entrench the university in fishery policy discussions in the province, but the policy makers were reluctant to play. This internal committee is a means to get Memorial's house in order, but there is a lack of consensus here as well. Should the group be a means to developing a strategic plan for Memorial in regards to fishery research?

**Doug:** That reluctance to cooperate isn't only on the part of policy makers. While in government, I had proposed a closer relationship with the university but that was derailed by MUN at the time.

**Art:** The strength of the university is individual scholarship, not so much collective (on an institution-wide basis). The influence of the university in fishery policy in the past has been the result of individual researchers. Trying to coordinate consensus across the university would be difficult and take a great deal of time.

**Robert Sweeny:** The debate surrounding resettlement had some academic involvement, and there was also significant academic scientific input leading up to the moratorium. But in these instances academic voices tended to be wrongheaded, and the impact was limited.

**Doug:** MUN could have a greater impact by better supporting people within the university who work on the fisheries. There is also a great deal to be learned from other jurisdictions, such as Norway, regarding the relationship between academics, universities, and government.

**Art:** It is impossible for a university, as an institution, to speak with one voice. Individual academic enterprise will be the most successful in playing an important role in policy making.

**Ian Fleming:** Traditionally in Canada and NL government science has been kept separate from university science. Often, the reluctance to cooperate is seen on the part of governments. In other countries there is a greater tendency to combine the two—government scientists embedded in universities and visa-versa. This allows for a far greater flow of information.

**Art:** A good example of an influential academic researcher is Peter Larkin in BC.

**Jose Lam:** Ideally the information exchange activities of this group will be kept separate from efforts to influence policy.

**Doug:** The two activities are not mutually exclusive.

**Gabriela Sabau:** Can the provincial government regulate the fishery with more care for its sustainability?

**Art:** The province cannot do much constitutionally other than lobby the federal government, and incubate and offer new ideas, which the federal government is usually open to. The success of the lobster fishery, which is rarely talked about because it is generally problem-free, is a model for other fisheries. The lobster fishery is almost self-regulating, with formal and informal local measures to manage the industry. It is much more difficult to regulate a large international fishery like cod.

**Dick Whitaker:** Things have changed in the fishery. Around this table there are a lot of retirees who are free to speak their mind publicly about whatever they wish. The main

message that comes through from Doug and Art is that one must “think nationally and act provincially.” In that case, is there a chance for an Atlantic-region CNLOPB-like regulatory model to be developed for the fishery?

**Dave Vardy:** John Crosbie proposed a bill to that effect once and the provinces rejected it.

**Doug:** We are at a different point now, and are going in a somewhat different direction. We are more ecologically conscious and the fishery is no longer the industry of last resort. This is an important time in our history.

**Art:** It is an important time for the university too, as the federal government withdrawals from science, there is an opportunity for academics to step up and fill the void.

**Bob Verge:** It is a critical time, the policies of the past are no longer relevant. The key issues include: economic development, ecological sustainability, and industry competitiveness. We aren’t in need of better policy or resource management so much as we need to address these key issues. There are often policies and expertise employed to address only one of these factors/issues to the detriment of others.

**Art:** It is very difficult to get things done in terms of fishery policy because there are so many competing interests involved. However, in the past good ideas that get on the table and have champions who insist they stay there, eventually make head way. Over time the greater good usually prevails.

**Barb Neis:** There have been many successful large-scale interdisciplinary academic research projects, alongside acts of individual academic enterprise, in the recent past. Universities also play a larger role in policy development than they realize. Almost every single policy maker has gone through university. But why do so few return to form partnerships? Are universities doing a good enough job? There needs to be emphasis on engaging the complexity of the issue with all stakeholders involved. However, there is a sad lack of academic rigour, curiosity, open-mindedness, and multi-disciplinarity exhibited. Academics must be willing to learn from one another. They must be excited to know what they don’t know. Academics are paid by the public to do a job, are they doing it well enough?

**Art:** Policy makers are products of universities, don’t underestimate this influence.

**Barb:** But many leave with undergraduate-level understanding of issues, which is dated and over-simplified, and few return.

**Doug:** Don't give up on the MUN Fishery Policy Forum, it is important. As is community engagement and also engagement with government—an area which needs a lot of work.

**Lynne Philips:** Universities are also different than they were in the past. Initiatives like the Public Engagement Framework (PEF) are causing reflection on how we engage with “publics.” Though, the PEF hasn't been systematic regarding how engagement is made sustainable and how the complexity of “publics” is accounted for.

**Ed Stern:** In 1968 there was \$6-million on the table to build a FRB Lab at MUN. It fell through because of political wrangling in the president's office and the building, the exact building, was built in Winnipeg instead. In 1953 an FRB Lab was proposed for the MUN Science Building, to which an official stated: “if not here, it might as well be built in the White Hills” where it eventually was.

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### **Next steps & Other business**

A survey was circulated to the group at the meeting and [online](#) to help set priority topics for future meetings.

The next meeting will be held in the fall.