

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

REGINALD BYRON (ed.), *Retrenchment and Regeneration in Rural Newfoundland*. Toronto: University of Toronto, 2003. 267 p.

If you want a case study of what can happen to resource-based economies when the logic of natural resource extraction meets government modernization policies, and when a moral economy faces off against merchant credit and the pressures of capital, then this book is a fine example of these processes. Similarly, if you want to know about rural Newfoundland today and how it got that way, then this volume is an excellent place to begin. With nine articles and a brief introduction, the volume provides much insight into Newfoundland's political economy and into what has happened to rural society since the cod moratorium in 1992.

Each chapter differs, depending on the author(s)' focus: societal level (local, region, province), discipline (human ecology, anthropology, environmental studies, public policy, sociology), industry (fisheries, forestry, mining), methodology (surveys, interviews, participant observation, content analysis, political economy), agents (fishermen, women, youth, migrants, bureaucrats, unions, communities) and labour processes (domestic commodity production, wage labour, co-operatives). The lack of an index, however, hinders a collating of topics across chapters. The lack of theoretical engagements is quite apparent in the chapters. Instead, the immediacy of the lived, material experiences in rural Newfoundland trump scholarly ruminations. Dependence, uncertainty, depopulation, socio-economic differentiation and hard choices are thus the topics of this volume, along with the human drama which these entail.

The first and last chapters framed the volume well. Sean Cadigan gives an excellent overview of the political economy of rural Newfoundland since the beginning of the 19th century. Its focus on the articulation of public policy and market exigencies as underlying resource depletion and, hence, the continual reproduction of the retrenchment and regeneration cycle among rural communities is intended in part as a critique of the "tragedy of the commons" interpretation and of modernization models. The last chapter, by J.D. House, addresses the period since 1995. It offers an overview of efforts to kick start, yet again, the rural development movement under new administrative and public policy initiatives focussed on capacity-building within regions/zones (rather than communities). How this Regional Economic Development plan was bureaucratized and politicized to the point of virtual impotency provides a good illustration of

applied sociology and of how reform, yet again thwarted, might still be achieved.

Within this political economic and public policy framework are chapters which portray particular resources, locales and/or people. Micro-histories of the fishery crisis after 1990 in the west coast of the Great Northern Peninsula (Graig Palmer) and in Petty Harbour near St John's (Matthew Clarke) explore the impact on the fishing industry, fishers, and local social organisation (family dynamics, inheritance and residence patterns, inter-household co-operation and community integration). One expression of such tensions, on Fogo Island, is dramatically rendered by Bonnie McCay's use of the transcripts of an investigation by the Human Rights Commission into a complaint about a decision by the directors of the Fogo Island Cooperative to link access to wage labour in the coop's processing plants to the requirement that workers' family members deliver their catches to the coop. The difficult choice reflected in this decision resulted from economic pressures, such as competition from other fish buyers and declining deliveries, plant overcapacity and a decreasing number of jobs: poignant by the fact that the cooperative was once an effort to protect members from the harshness of capitalist relations.

Hard choices in the context of the fisheries crisis and limited economic opportunities also underlie the lives of youths living in a south-west, coastal community (Dona Lee Davis) and of returned migrants from/to Bonavista peninsula (Peter Sinclair). Concerns about, and experiences with, their poor life prospects and their limited cultural capital, alongside a deep sense of belonging to rural places, lead to an ambivalent and often bleak outlook among youth while, simultaneously, affecting the social life of rural communities.

Neis and Kean describe an interdisciplinary project at Memorial University on why the fisheries collapsed. Social science, biology and local fisheries knowledge, together, allowed for a depiction of "fishing up" sequences which progressively depleted the stocks. The process was propelled by the interaction of fishing behaviours, inadequate fishery- management models and unsatisfactory scientific paradigms. Political interventions and the demands of the market also played their role, such as in forestry. Omohundro and Roy analyse these as a debate resulting from differing views of what forests and rural communities are for. They also see some potential for converging views and practices which may eventually lead to resource sustainability.

From this volume, we learn that modernization efforts, and its boom-bust cycles, have not served rural Newfoundland well. At the same time, we learn about the dramatic rise in living standards and expectations over the past decades. Such contradictions require tracking and explaining. This volume is a contribution to this on-going effort and its broad range of topics will be extremely useful for teaching.

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