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Organizing New England Commercial Fishermen; Local, State, and Regional Efforts

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ORGANIZING NEW ENGLAND COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN:
LOCAL, STATE, AND REGIONAL EFFORTS

by

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Requirements for the Degree of
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	4
II. LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS	6
FISHERY COOPERATIVES	6
Point Judith Fishermen's Co-op	
Association	7
Provincetown Co-Operative Fishing	
Industries, Inc	9
BOATOWNER'S ASSOCIATIONS	11
FISHERMEN'S WIVES	14
III. STATE-WIDE ORGANIZATIONS	20
THE FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT	
CORPORATION	20
IV. REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS	31
THE ATLANTIC OFFSHORE FISH AND	
LOBSTER ASSOCIATION	32
Membership	33
Operating Structure	37
Finances	37
Meetings	39
Accomplishments	40
The Future	42

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

CHAPTER	PAGE
THE NEW ENGLAND FISHERIES	
STEERING COMMITTEE	44
Membership	47
Operating Structure	50
Finances	51
Meetings	54
Accomplishments	55
The Future	59
V. CONCLUSION	64
BIBLIOGRAPHY	68

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

New England commercial fishermen are organizing to resolve problems among themselves and influence fishery-related decisions at all levels of government.

In past years, many local organizations began with enthusiasm and then folded or lapsed into impotence. Others prospered, but were unable to effectively represent their concerns before higher level decision makers. This was particularly true when the New England coastal fishermen were competing for government attention with distant water fishing interests, such as tuna fishermen, or with fish importers who were less concerned with who caught the fish than with their price, quality, and availability. The coastal fishermen were also at odds with the Department of Defense, which feared extended fisheries claims might lead to creeping jurisdiction.

A need emerged for regional fishermen's groups which, with a potential for large membership, substantial financing, and a full-time staff, could speak for the New England fishermen. A national organizing effort could grow from that base.

This study details several forms which fishery organizations have taken at local and state levels. Emphasis is then placed on the formation, growth, and operating

procedures of the two New England regional efforts.)

All local and state fishermen's groups in the region are not detailed; neither are all the concerns of the region's commercial fishing industry, which includes dealers, marine suppliers, processors, and others, as well as fishermen.

(There are also limitations to the study of which the reader should be aware. Time limits imposed research restrictions, some of the author's written inquiries were not returned, many persons interviewed requested that their remarks not be directly attributed to them, and the organizational meetings attended represent only a sample of the total held prior to and during the study. The reader should also recognize that some of the groups studied are in their infancy. To judge their successes to date as the sole measure of their value is to ignore their potential, and do a disservice to the organizing movement.

Nevertheless, reports on organizing efforts need to be made, for the long range effectiveness of fishermen's groups may well depend upon the familiarity of the industry, government, and general public with their programs.

CHAPTER II

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Local organizations generally consist of fishermen from the same port. The organization's concerns may be wide ranging, but that does not alter its status as local.

Local groups detailed here include two fishery cooperatives, a boatowner's organization, and an association of fishermen's wives. The last is included because the wives function as an extension of their husbands' interests.

FISHERY COOPERATIVES

A fishery cooperative is an association of persons engaged in the fishing industry as harvesters, collectors, or cultivators of aquatic products on public or private beds who operate in compliance with the Fishery Cooperative Marketing Act of 1934. This Act, based upon the Capper-Volstead Act of 1922, which applies to farmers' cooperatives, authorizes fishery cooperative members, without violating antitrust laws, to:

...act together in associations, corporate or otherwise, with or without capital stock, in collectively catching, producing, preparing for market, processing, handling, and marketing in interstate and foreign commerce, such products of said persons....

Though the Marketing Act does not define the exact

structure of a fishery cooperative, it does require that the co-op conform to one or both of the following:

First. That no member of the association is allowed more than one vote because of the amount of stock or membership capital he may own therein; or

Second. That the association does not pay dividends on stock or membership capital in excess of 8 per centum per annum.

In addition, the co-op,

...shall not deal in the products of non-members to an amount greater in value than such as are handled by it for members.

A third requirement is that the co-op not monopolize or restrain trade such that the price of an aquatic product is unduly enhanced thereby.

Point Judith Fishermen's Co-op Association

The Point Judith Fishermen's Co-op Association of Galilee, Rhode Island was formed in 1948. It now has 119 members, 75 of whom are active fishermen. The remainder, though no longer fishing due to retirement or other employment, support the co-op's programs through continued affiliation. Each member pays a \$225 entrance fee and must purchase at least one share of common stock at \$100 per share. The co-op generates additional funds by retaining a small percentage of the value of the fish it handles. Non-members may sell their catch through the co-op, but they have no voting rights and are not entitled to any

share in the co-op's redistributed profits, which were in excess of \$250,000¹ in 1972.

The co-op provides lumpers to unload vessels, sells ice and fuel, and maintains an around-the-clock supply store. It offers members reduced P&I and hull insurance, life insurance, and a form of unemployment compensation. The co-op also freezes and markets catches.

The Point Judith Co-op gives its members a self-controlled outlet for their product, a service oriented structure to reduce their costs, and a forum for discussion in the absence of a fishermen's union at the port. In addition, the members' views are more forcefully put forward outside of the co-op because of the number of fishermen it represents. Locally, the co-op can speak for commercial fishing interests in the competition for limited dock space with recreational vessels. At the state level, the co-op can work with the Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Cooperative Extension Service, Marine Advisory Service, and New England Marine Resources Information Program connected with the University of Rhode Island. At the regional level, the co-op's president, Jacob Dykstra, is vice-president of the New England Fisheries Steering Committee. At the national level, Mr. Dykstra is also a member of the United States Law of the Sea Delegation.

Provincetown Co-Operative Fishing Industries, Inc.

Provincetown Co-Operative Fishing Industries, Inc. of Provincetown, Massachusetts was formed in 1970. With approximately 65 members, the co-op is attempting to develop a service structure similar to that of the Point Judith Co-op.

Affiliation with the co-op begins with an application to the board of directors which, if accepted, requires payment of a \$25 associate member fee. After a six month waiting period, if full membership is approved, the applicant can become a full member with voting rights and may purchase shares of common stock at \$100 per share. Though only boatowners or crew can purchase common stock and vote, non-voting preferred stock is also available at \$100 per share. Of the authorized 1000 shares of common and 1000 shares of preferred, 112 of the former and 150² of the latter are outstanding.

The co-op generates additional funds in the same manner as the Point Judith Co-op, by retaining a small percentage of the value of the fish it handles; six cents per pound for fish destined for New York and five cents per pound for fish destined for Boston. The co-op does not buy fish, but merely acts as an intermediary in the sales process. In 1971 this service resulted in a co-op profit of \$32,500 and allowed a 7% dividend on common

stock, a 6% dividend on preferred, and a small patronage refund to member boats.³

With regard to services, in addition to acting as intermediary in fish sales the co-op unloads vessels and markets both commercial landings and recreational tuna catches. It has a P&I and hull insurance plan and represents manufacturers of vessel equipment, including engines, to help reduce member's costs.

The co-op began a study of fish handling and box standards in 1970 under a \$2000 grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity in anticipation of more strict federal health and fish handling regulations.⁴ It also had pending, as of its last available annual report, a \$27,000 technical assistance grant from the Economic Development Administration⁵ for a study of the Lower Cape Cod fishing industry.

Locally, the co-op presses for improvements to the Provincetown wharf and harbor breakwater and for increased services to the fishing industry. At the state level, the co-op works with the Chatham Seafood Co-Operative of Chatham, Massachusetts to formulate a united Cape Cod fisheries position before the Commonwealth Division of Marine Fisheries and the National Marine Fisheries Service. At the regional level, Gayle Charles, general manager of the co-op, was instrumental in founding the New England Fisheries Steering Committee and serves as its president. He is also a member of the ICNAF Industry Advisory Board.

BOATOWNER'S ASSOCIATIONS

Organizations have also been formed by fishing vessel owners. In a unionized port such groups serve as a negotiating focus with crew unions. They also can provide a united front in discussions with dealers over ex-vessel prices for their catches.

New Bedford, Massachusetts provides an interesting example of how one boatowner group began. New Bedford boatowners do most of their local business with the Seafood Dealers Association of New Bedford, to which most local dealers belong. To illustrate the amount of money with which the dealers and boatowners are concerned, in 1972 the eleven member Seafood Dealers Association handled New Bedford landed fish and scallops with an ex-vessel value of \$20,000,000 and a sale value of \$60,000,000.⁶ The same dealers also purchased product with an ex-vessel value of \$3,000,000 from Newport, Rhode Island and Sandwich, Provincetown, and Marthas Vineyard, Massachusetts, some of which came from New Bedford vessels.⁷

Two large boatowners' groups, one small group, and a few independents land the catch in New Bedford. Approximately 90% of the fishing vessels are members of one of the two large organizations, Boatowners United, Inc. or Seafood Producers' Association.⁸ The actual breakdown between the two could not be determined as Seafood

Producers' Association claims to represent "72 vessels, or 80% of the vessels working out of the port"⁹ while Boat-owners United claims vessel membership in the port is "about 50/50 split between the two organizations"¹⁰.

Seafood Producers' Association was formed in 1936 and was, until 1971, the only large boatowners' group in the port. In early 1971, during a dispute between the New Bedford Fishermen's Union and dockside dealers, Seafood Producers' Association called a meeting to consider the Association's position on the dispute. Two factions emerged. One favored a boat tie-up in support of the union. The other wanted to continue fishing to protect their investment and to avoid an act which might be interpreted as an illegal attempt at price fixing. When the "official" Association position was announced as opposing a tie-up, some of the first faction walked out, forming the nucleus for Boat-owners United. One of those to walk out, Leonard J. Roche, President of the Association from 1967-69 and a director at the time of the dispute, was elected President of Boatowners United.¹¹

In a National Fisherman article of mid-1972, Mr. Roche stated that he left the Association because those in charge had "a reluctance to rock the boat" and were an "armchair clique of dragger owners, retired from sea activity"¹². Mr. Roche restated this opinion in a conversation with the author, saying that his departure was a

result of "frustration with the conservative directors".¹³

Believing that Boatowners United could be "a close-knit and democratically oriented association, of sufficient size to be an influence no one could ignore"¹⁴, Mr. Roche intends the organization,

...to provide service to the owner-operator in a way such that things he is unfamiliar with, such as business practices, government communication, and the administrative problems of running a vessel, are made easier.¹⁵

To achieve these ends, Boatowners United currently operates with an annual budget "in excess of \$20,000, most of which goes for lawyers fees during negotiations with the crew union".¹⁶ This money is collected through a fee of \$25 per month per vessel.

As neither boatowner's group would make available a copy of its by-laws, the operating structure of each can not be detailed. It is known, however, that boatowner's groups have been active in pressing for group insurance plans, precise fish weighing scales to insure correct payment from dealers, and vouchers from dealers upon delivery of a catch to the dealer's plant.¹⁷

In the summer of 1972, the presidents of both boatowner's groups indicated that one organization would probably serve the producers the best, but reunification does not appear imminent, based upon Mr. Roche's belief that "having different organizations is good in that it

provides boatowners with a choice", even though "it does
create problems with negotiations".¹⁸ Both groups are,
however, members of the New England Fisheries Steering
Committee where they work together on regional issues.
It is also assumed that they cooperate in areas of mutual
concern to New Bedford.

FISHERMEN'S WIVES

That the wives of New England commercial fishermen
should be concerned with the status of the fishing industry
is to be expected. What is unusual is that some of the
women should organize to protect their husbands' future
employment.

One such organization, United Fishermen's Wives of
New Bedford, Massachusetts, began in 1969 because, the
president says, "the women were tired of listening to their
husbands yap".¹⁹ Disturbed by low ex-vessel prices for
fish, stealing at the wharf, and low wages,²⁰ the women
formally incorporated in May, 1969.

The purpose of the group is:

...to promote the general welfare of
the fishing industry in the North
Atlantic area; to appear before
committees and administrative agencies
for the purpose of sponsoring the
enactment of sound laws, rules and
regulations pertaining to or affecting
the fishing industry; and to engage
in any lawful activity which will
enhance the efficient progress of the
fishing industry.²¹

Any fisherman's wife or widow may join the organization with the approval of a majority of the members, and may then participate on one or more of the following committees: entertainment, finance, legislative, hospitality, and scholarship. Meetings are usually held two evenings a month in the New Bedford Fishermen's Union hall.

The organizations activities center in three areas: internal information, local services, and local, regional, and national fishery policy pressure.

Concerning internal information, the organization seeks to inform its membership on the operations of various segments of the New England fishing industry and the problems each faces. To illustrate, guest speakers have spoken and shown films on such subjects as the operations of the Northeast Fisheries Center, the fish processing industry, fishing operations and equipment, and how the International Convention on the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries works.

In the area of local services, the organization is community directed in that it seeks to perform meaningful charity work and to "bring up the image of the fisherman, to educate the community on the waterfront".²² It provides college scholarships to members' children, raises funds for retarded children, gives dinners for retired fishermen, and collects money for a local drug abuse program. It provides copies of a book on the New Bedford fishing

industry to area public and parochial schools,²³ sells vessel safety flags, and assists with the annual blessing of the fleet. The organization also mounted an \$1100 display on the New Bedford fishing industry at the 1971 Boston Fish Expo.

According to the president, the fishermen's wives believe they can be more aggressive than their husbands and can attend meetings more regularly.²⁴ The latter allows them to formulate responses to fishery issues on a more continuous basis.

At the policy influencing level, the organization convinced a branch of a large supermarket chain in New Bedford to carry fresh New Bedford fish. Members demonstrated in support of the boat tie-up noted in the previous section on boatowner's groups and objected to the use of fish imported from Norway in the school lunch programs of local schools. The organization provided financial support to enable some members to attend a hearing on the possible closing of a Massachusetts marine hospital. Some members demonstrated at a Boston meeting of the International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries, contending that the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Convention failed to protect the legitimate interests of New England fishermen. The women have also written to Washington to support extended United States fishery jurisdiction and the improvement of aids to navigation.

The organization maintains contact with other fishermen's wives groups and has offered advice to women trying to organize in Gloucester, Massachusetts.²⁵

As for the future, though the organization began "as a ball of fire",²⁶ with meeting attendance of 45-55 women, it is now less active and meeting attendance fluctuates between 20-35 women. In fact, several persons in and out of the organization indicated that it might fall apart without the efforts of its president, Lucille Swain, who has held the position since its inception. If it does, it will be unfortunate for United Fishermen's Wives Organization has the potential for significant influence upon and real service to New Bedford and the fishing industry.

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CHAPTER III

STATE-WIDE ORGANIZATIONS

Most commercial fishermen's organizations in New England developed in one port and remained there. Lack of expansion may have been due to a number of reasons, such as the port's failure to identify with state-wide concerns, local opposition to membership drives of outside organizations, or a fear that local interests would be submerged in a broader based organization. Organizations which have expanded are based upon a species approach, such as all members being lobstermen, or are oriented toward assisting fishermen with common income problems. The following details one of the latter, the Fisheries Development Corporation of Rockland, Maine.

THE FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Every fishermen's organization is employment oriented in that it is concerned with the maintenance and/or improvement of its members' financial position, but few are directly engaged in employment stimulation as a primary function.

The impetus for state-wide fishermen's organizations having employment stimulation as a principal goal was the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964¹ and the Demonstration² Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966.

Title I-D of the 1964 act provided for venture capital pools and funds for equity capital and administrative expenses to community development corporations which could set up businesses in "Special Impact" areas. Title II of the 1964 act provided for the establishment of community action agencies which would plan community improvement programs and then administer them directly or delegate administration to private, non-profit, or public corporations. The 1966 act provided for the establishment of city demonstration agencies which would fund public or private agencies to administer Model Cities projects intended to improve low-income urban areas.

Funds available under these two acts could be supplemented by private grants or contributions, the issuance of stock, bank financing, the Small Business Administration, small business investment companies, or the Economic Development Administration.³

A young Maine lawyer, Mr. David Williams, wanted to apply the principles of community development corporations to helping low-income Maine fishermen. Mr. Williams was once employed by the Peace Corps on an eleven man team of fisheries advisors in the Fiji Islands. Now Deputy Director of the Division of Economic Opportunity in Maine, he views the problems of the Maine fishing industry from the perspective of one who has worked in a developing economy:

The trouble with the United States is that Maine isn't treated as an underdeveloped country. No other country would allow a major industry like Maine's fisheries to die. In fact, the United States would probably be sending such a country financial, technical, and administrative aid to guarantee the survival of the fishing industry.⁴

In January, 1971 Mr. Williams began seeking funds for a Fisheries Development Corporation (FDC) from private sources such as the Ford Foundation, and government agencies such as the Office of Economic Opportunity, the Economic Development Administration, and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries (now the National Marine Fisheries Service).

The corporation he envisioned would be a holding company controlled by fishermen. It would operate profit-making subsidiaries on its own or jointly with successful private business ventures. If the latter, FDC would hold a voting majority of stock in the subsidiary, split the profits accordingly, and then re-invest in other FDC subsidiaries or in other more stable, private companies.

Initial requests for funding did not, however, bring results. All respondents indicated that they could not fund what was only an idea. Mr. Williams then turned to the New England Regional Commission (NERCOM) for a planning and start-up grant. In september, 1971 NERCOM assured him of a \$30,000 grant to carry FDC through March, 1973.

Mr. Williams then sought, through an advertisement

in the Peace Corps (now ACTION) newsletter, a fisheries officer to direct the new organization. Ten qualified persons responded, but only one was still available when the NERCOM money finally arrived in January, 1972. This was James Platts who had, coincidentally, served with Mr. Williams in the Fiji Islands. Two extension officers were chosen to work with Mr. Platts. The first, Ernest E. Grant, had been a commercial fisherman for twenty years and is presently enrolled as a Deferred Associate Degree student at Southern Maine Vocational Technical Institute in the Marine Science Program.⁵ His salary is paid through the New Careers Program of the Maine Concentrated Employment Program under the Maine Department of Labor. The second extension officer, Mr. Barry Witham, is a former lobsterman. His salary is paid through the NERCOM grant, as is the salary of the FDC secretary working at the organization's Rockland, Maine office.

In August, 1972, an interim board of directors for FDC was elected. By prior arrangement the majority were low-income fishermen (class A) to assure their control. The rest were successful fishermen (class B) and individuals with marine interests (class C). The interim board served until December, 1972 when a permanent board was elected, again with a majority of low-income members.

FDC now has approximately 400 members spread along the entire Maine coast. Each has purchased the limit of one

share of stock for \$1, which gives the purchaser voting rights, but not dividends. The membership drive began with meetings along the Maine coast and a mass mailing to 6000 licensed fishermen. ⁶ Some of the recruitment success has been due to the basic appeal of an employment oriented corporation. Some was due to the "Red Tide" which spread along the Maine coast forcing the closure of clam flats and affecting the income of clam diggers. Some diggers turned to FDC for help in gaining state and federal financial assistance. Some diggers also turned to FDC in response to its endorsement of proposals to place clam flats under state, rather than local, authority for ⁷ licensing and management.

These membership incentives have, however, created some initial problems for FDC because some Maine fishermen consider it too heavily weighted toward clammer's interests. In addition, the low income orientation of FDC disturbs some Maine fishermen who don't wish to be identified as low-income. According to one newspaper account, another group which might not support FDC is fish dealers who ⁸ fear competition from it. Other people who are not sympathetic to FDC are fishermen who see it as just another government program which, particularly if it expands its ⁹ influence, is to be distrusted.

Nevertheless, FDC is steadily gaining members. Some join in the belief "there is a drawing power to an

association...to get programs started for all facets of the industry",¹⁰ others in the hope FDC will help fishermen "get protection from the foreign fleets"¹¹ or will "increase our fields of production and ease up on each individual field, thereby gaining some kind of balance so everyone may make a living without destroying what is now a good way of life".¹² Still others join to keep in touch with the fishing community. As one member in the marine supply business stated, "I joined the FDC to help get the fishing industry back on a profitable basis....That is the only way I could create a market".¹³

To retain its present membership and encourage growth, FDC has under study or has initiated several employment oriented programs. A pilot aquaculture program, in cooperation with the State of Maine, is now training five coastal residents in sea farming in Bath, Maine. The intent is to establish self-sufficient sea farming businesses and then to have present trainees instruct other interested persons, with an eventual goal of at least 125 persons so employed. Aquaculture is of particular interest to FDC because of predictions that the potential value of aquaculture to the Maine economy could exceed Maine's total manufactured product value.¹⁴ If there is to be no heavy industry all along Maine's coast, as the Commissicner of Maine's Department of Sea and Shore Fisheries advocates,¹⁵ aquaculture may be able to carry some of the economic load in

coastal communities. There will be some problems, of course. Aquaculture restrictions based upon Colonial Ordinances of 1641-1647, which prohibit private ownership of marine waters and submerged lands, will have to be modified. In addition, the editor of a report on the development of aquaculture in New England says, "substantial commercial scale ventures would not be common for at least a decade".¹⁶ FDC, therefore, also is working on the feasibility of marketing cooperatives, a sawmill, shellfish depuration, a vessel lease-back program, and the use of underutilized sea products.

The future of FDC is open to question, the major problem as of March, 1973 being funding.

We did the best at what we thought would be hardest, gaining members, and the worst at what we thought would be the easiest, securing additional funding.¹⁷

President Johnson's anti-poverty programs are being dismantled and federal funding for poverty programs is harder to get.¹⁸ Funding for the regional commissions, including NERCOM, was not requested in President Nixon's budget proposals for fiscal year 1974.¹⁹ The future of the federally financed low-income legal assistance program, which provided the legal support for FDC's start-up,²⁰ is in doubt.

As of March, 1973 alternative sources of income for FDC had not been found. As the low-income members of FDC can not fund it, if outside funding can not be found FDC

will surely die.

Even if additional funding is secured, success will require institutional strength. Management personnel must not let the need for successful businesses override the need for public support and FDC must be prepared to assume the high service costs associated with employing less skilled workers. Workers skills and salaries must be upgraded if FDC is not to be an employer of the permanently poor. Talented, and potentially costly, financial managers will be required. The FDC can not be run, in the words of Mr. Williams, "by liberal arts majors who come to Maine to get away from it all".²¹ Program priorities will also be required. One member expressed the opinion:

FDC has undertaken a huge job, but in their efforts to canvass the state they have not had enough energy to put into visible projects. They early got involved with clams and aquaculture. Clams are a low profile species; aquaculture is a dirty word among fishermen. If they had concentrated in one area to get going as a pilot project they would have had something to show prospective members.²²

Most importantly, FDC will require the personal commitment of Maine fishermen. It must refute the feeling that "it is not interested in finding out what the low income people really want or need, but rather tells them what they need".²³ As one member noted, "just telling members this is your corporation does not make people feel it".²⁴

FDC is, however, still young and, like most new organizations, may take some time to settle in and

respond fully to the wishes of its members and the opportunities for employment of fishermen in Maine. Several years will probably be necessary before it is known whether Mr. Williams' creation will really work.

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CHAPTER IV

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Regional organizations of New England commercial fishermen are more recent than most local efforts. The most likely reasons for the delay are threefold: (1) most fishermen jealously guarded their independence and failed to recognize common interests; (2) conflict between fishing interests, such as pot lobstermen and fin fish draggers, was not serious enough to require cooperation; (3) traditional fishing grounds were largely the domain of New England fishermen.

The situation began to change in the 1950s when an international interest in fisheries, combined with serious differences on coastal state rights, surfaced at the 1955 Rome Technical Conference and the 1958 and 1960 Law of the Sea Conferences. In the early 1960s, foreign fleets appeared in traditional New England fishing grounds of the Northwest Atlantic. As the foreign effort expanded, New England food fish landings began to decline, being cut in half between 1962 and 1971. Haddock landings alone dropped to one-fifth their 1962 level. During the same period the New England and Middle Atlantic region's share of the United States catch by weight declined from 33% to 13% and foreign fishery imports to the United States¹ nearly doubled.

In 1971, as the offshore pot lobster fishery expanded, conflict between pot lobstermen and other fishermen grew serious. Concurrently, foreign trawlers, disregarding pot areas, began to damage lobster gear on the continental shelf.

Two regional groups emerged in New England in response to these changed circumstances; the Atlantic Offshore Fish and Lobster Association and the New England Fisheries Steering Committee.

THE ATLANTIC OFFSHORE FISH AND LOBSTER ASSOCIATION

The Atlantic Offshore Fish and Lobster Association (AOFLA), which is headquartered in Narragansett, Rhode Island, was conceived by nine members of an organizing committee from Rhode Island and Massachusetts. One of those on the committee spoke on the necessity for an offshore lobstermen's association at a February, 1972 Fisherman's Forum at the University of Rhode Island. At this forum, an annual meeting of fishermen co-sponsored by the University's Marine Advisory Service and the Point Judith Co-op, he suggested that an offshore lobstermen's association could work toward reducing conflict between domestic pot lobster interests and other fishermen, could assist fishermen file claims with the Department of State for gear loss or damage by foreign vessels, and might eventually establish a lobbyist in Washington.

The organizing committee, encouraged by expressions of support at the Forum, voted to proceed with the formal establishment of the Atlantic Offshore Fish and Lobster Association on April 26, 1972.³ They had planned to call the organization the Atlantic Offshore Fisheries Association, but changed the title because, according to the organizers, "the inclusion of 'lobster' in the title would generate the attention of politicians and the general public...".⁴ It is more likely, however, that "lobster" was included because a significant number of those showing an early interest were lobstermen.

The organizing committee also decided at the April meeting to employ an executive secretary who would be responsible "for making our association a lively, going concern".⁵ The choice, Mr. Richard Allen, was a young lobsterman with an Associate Degree in Commercial Fisheries, a B.S. in Natural Resources Development, and recently, a Master of Marine Affairs from the University of Rhode Island.

Membership

By March 1973, Mr. Allen had recruited fifty six AOFLA members. The recruitment process began with an advertisement in the National Fisherman (Figure I). Membership invitations were then sent to 2000 persons on the mailing list of the New England Marine Resources

ATLANTIC OFFSHORE FISH AND LOBSTER ASSOCIATION

PURPOSES OF THE ASSOCIATION:

ESTABLISH OUR POSITION AS AN EFFECTIVE ASSOCIATION TO NEGOTIATE THE USE OF THE OFFSHORE LOBSTER GROUNDS BETWEEN FIN FISHERMEN, LOBSTER DRAGGERS, POT FISHERMEN AND FOREIGN FISHING INTERESTS.

ESTABLISH LEGAL COUNSEL AND ADVISE AND GUIDE THE MEMBERSHIP IN RECORDING AND PRESENTING GEAR CLAIMS TO GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND FOREIGN FISHING INTERESTS AND ALSO NEGOTIATE WITH THE PURPOSE OF AVOIDING GEAR CLAIMS BETWEEN DOMESTIC FISHING INTERESTS.

ESTABLISH A LOBBYIST IN WASHINGTON TO REPRESENT THE ATLANTIC OFFSHORE FISHING INTERESTS.

PUBLISH A NEWSLETTER TO EFFECTIVELY MAINTAIN COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE ASSOCIATION.

PROMOTE AND INFLUENCE LEGISLATION ON BOTH THE FEDERAL AND STATE LEVEL WHICH WILL ASSIST THE COMMERCIAL FISHING INTERESTS.

OPERATE THE ASSOCIATION AS A NONBUSINESS CORPORATION WITH A FULL TIME EXECUTIVE SECRETARY AND AN ELECTED BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPRESENTING EACH OF THE MAJOR SECTIONAL OFFSHORE FISHING INTERESTS.

Eligibility: Each vessel or corporation engaged in the offshore fisheries including fin fish dragging, lobster dragging, seining, pot fishing, or other commercial offshore fishing efforts will comprise the voting membership. Finfish and shellfish dealers, equipment manufacturers, suppliers, party boats, other fisheries organizations, etc. will be welcomed as associate members.

Dues: Annual dues will be \$200. — for voting members and associate members.

Upon receipt of dues each voting member will be sent a facsimile chart showing areas and seasons for pot fishing and dragging as agreed upon by offshore fishermen from each area of the coast. Information of an economic nature and other literature will also be furnished.

Help us help you. Send your check to:

Atlantic Offshore Fish and Lobster Association

Name: _____ Tel.: _____

P.O. Box 780,
Narragansett, R. I. 02882

Address: _____

Home Port: _____ Kind of Fishing: _____

Area of Operation (example: Georges, Hudson Canyon, etc.): _____

Information Program (NEMRIP), 700 groundfish certificate holders on the east coast, approximately 50 dealers, and participants in the Fisherman's Forum.

Quite a few expressions of interest were received in the early months, but only 3 dealers, 12 persons from the NEMRIP list, 35 from the Fisherman's Forum invitations, and a few from the National Fisherman advertisement joined. Returns from the groundfish certificate holders are not yet in as these invitations were not sent out until late December, 1972.

Some persons objected to the \$200 annual membership fee, but most of the same individuals did not affiliate when less expensive membership categories were instituted. Others have not joined because they feel AOFLA is too heavily weighted toward pot lobstermen. Mr. Allen, in response, asserts that pot lobster and dragger interests are evenly balanced. Membership applications show that of the 56 AOFLA members, 47% designated themselves as pot lobstermen exclusively and 52% as either pot lobstermen or dragger lobstermen. When one considers membership categories:

<u>Member</u> (voting)	<u>Associate Member</u> (non-voting)
Full Voting	Contributing
Limited Voting (do not vote on issues of strictly offshore significance)	Supporting
	Sponsor

Pot lobstermen represent 50% of the full voting members.

These figures are, however, derived from initial membership applications. Some members have changed fishing practices since applying and others are likely to do so in the future. To illustrate, of 50% of the members responding to the author's inquiries, one member has switched from pot lobstering to dragging, another from pot lobstering to dragging and purse seining, and a third from pot lobstering to seining. The composition of AOFLA can also change with the addition of new members.

Other fishermen have not joined AOFLA because they feel it is "a Point Judith outfit". In fact, only 32% of the members and associate members live in the Point Judith, Rhode Island area. However, their influence is greater when membership categories are considered, for these same persons represent 45% of the full voting members.

Those who did join AOFLA give as their reasons: "to help solve offshore gear conflicts; "to help fight for a 200 mile fishing zone"; and to deal with "the foreign fleets, the potential for legislation declaring the lobster a creature of the shelf, and territorial limits". The most frequent reason given is the need for support of efforts to communicate fishermen's needs to decision makers if the New England fishing industry and the fishermen's livelihood is to be protected.

Operating Structure

AOFLA is unincorporated and has only a draft set of by-laws. Until April, 1973, the association was under the direction of the original organizing committee. A board of directors is in the process of being formed as a result of an election held over the past several months through mail ballots. Each full and limited voting member has one vote in the election of the board, regardless of the number of vessels he represents. This one vote procedure was instituted to prevent one member with several vessels from gaining excessive influence. Associate members, as a group, also elect one board member. At an AOFLA meeting in Galilee, Rhode Island on April 28, 1973, elected board members who were present chose AOFLA's officers for the next twelve months. This included a president, two vice presidents, a secretary, and a treasurer. Mr. Allen remains as executive secretary.

The draft by-laws are unclear on whether decisions of the board are subject to review by the general membership. They are also unclear on whether general membership decisions will be made by a majority vote or a sense of the meeting. The latter is more likely because, as Mr. Allen says, "How effective will a decision be if the vote is divided 60/40?"⁷

Finances

The financial position of AOFLA is precarious. All incoming monies to date have been from membership dues based upon the following schedule:

Members

Full Voting - \$200
 Limited Voting - \$50

Associate Members

Contributing - \$50
 Supporting - \$200
 Sponsor - \$500

Approximately \$7-8000 has been spent since AOFLA's inception, most for Mr. Allen's salary, which ceased in November, 1972 due to a lack of funds. The rest is spent for secretarial services, mailing, printing, telephone, and membership dues on the New England Fisheries Steering Committee. The AOFLA office costs the association nothing as it is merely a walled off portion of the basement of Mr. Allen's home.

Most AOFLA members deduct their dues from their income tax as a business expense. a tax deduction will also be possible if AOFLA incorporates as a non-profit association.

AOFLA has two funding requests before the National Marine Fisheries Service. One would enable Mr. Allen to attend fishery meetings and keep in touch with developments in the industry. The other would support a "Conference on the Potential of Artificial Propagation for Increasing Yields in the Inshore Lobster Fishery". AOFLA is also seeking financial assistance from private foundations and Sea Grant.

The organizing committee originally assumed membership fees would be a sufficient funding source for AOFLA, based upon 100 members at the outset, each paying \$200, and eventual growth to at least 400 members. The failure of AOFLA to reach even 100 members in its first year of

operations has been discouraging. The problem, as noted by Mr. Allen, is that "you need more members to justify outside funding and you need outside funding to recruit more members".⁸

Meetings

Two general meetings of AOFLA have been held; one in Galilee, Rhode Island and the other in Montauk, New York. As the location of the second meeting indicates, AOFLA is not confined to New England, but this does not detract from it being a regional organization representing New England commercial fishermen.

The first AOFLA meeting dealt with essentially six matters: (1) the formation of a membership committee representing ports from Maine to Connecticut; (2) discussion of ways in which pot fishermen might cooperate with other interests, particularly by calling in pot field coordinates regularly to the Coast Guard and not calling in areas larger than necessary for the amount of gear; (3) distribution of pot-setting guidelines and suggestions for preparing claims for loss of or damage to gear; (4) discussion of possible means by which AOFLA might influence legislation and general government policy; (5) recommendations that all vessels comply with the International Rules of the Road to aid in distinguishing types of fishing activity occurring in an area at night; (6) a report that

a letter had been sent to the Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service requesting that the lobster be declared a creature of the continental shelf.⁹

The second general meeting dealt with: (1) questions concerning fair representation of all segments of the fishing industry in AOFLA; (2) bringing the New Jersey, Virginia, and North Carolina fishermen into the association; (3) discussion of gear areas, fixed gear marking, and the need for pot lobstermen and druggers to compromise so that both might make best use of offshore grounds.¹⁰

Accomplishments

Mr. Allen attempts to forward monthly newsletters with fishing news of interest and AOFLA activities to members and interested parties, but does not always succeed due to time limits and financial problems. Mr. Allen has also distributed informational pamphlets on the August, 1972 revised United States draft fisheries articles, the 1945 Truman Proclamations, and the Chilean declaration claiming 200 mile jurisdiction.

Press releases on AOFLA activities are submitted to National Fisherman, two Providence, Rhode Island daily papers, and a weekly Narragansett, Rhode Island paper.

Mr. Allen also represents AOFLA at fishery conferences, speaks with appropriate government and private sources on industry problems, and serves on a committee attempting

to solve gear conflicts. He is secretary of a Task Force Committee on Fishing Gear Conflict which, with members from Rhode Island, Long Island, and Massachusetts, is trying to develop solutions to the conflict between pot lobstermen and draggers. He has been in contact with the Marine Treaties and Law Enforcement Branch of the Coast Guard concerning enforcement of regulations against foreign vessels violating the exclusive fishery zone of the United States.

Mr. Allen represented AOFLA at a National Fisheries Policy Conference in September, 1972 where he submitted a position paper recommending:

1. Fishing effort in U.S. Coastal Waters should be reduced to pre-1965 levels, based upon a standardized unit of effort. If necessary this reduction should be imposed and enforced by unilateral U.S. action.
2. In order to give fair warning to foreign fishing nations, the United States should make it very clear that no claims to traditional fishing will be considered if they are based on effort which was introduced after a stock reached its maximum sustainable yield. This would allow foreign nations to begin phasing out such effort prior to negotiations concerning traditional fishing.¹¹

Though this position was not accepted at the Conference, the United States does now advocate a reduction of foreign fishing effort in the ICNAF area.¹²

Mr. Allen has also spoken with the Conservation Director of the American Petroleum Institute concerning the potential for conflict and/or cooperation between the

fishing and petroleum industry, and with the Manager of the New England Production Credit Association to discuss fisheries financing through the Farm Credit Act of 1971.¹³ He was invited to serve as a delegate to the U.S.-Polish and U.S.-U.S.S.R. Bilaterals and is a delegate to the upcoming Canadian-U.S. Bilaterals. Mr. Allen provided fisheries input to a Washington, D.C. coastal zone management meeting and represented AOFLA at Fish Expo in Seattle and at conferences of the Law of the Sea Institute in Rhode Island.

Through the efforts of a member from Noank, Connecticut, AOFLA worked with the office of Congressman Robert H. Steele to set up a hearing on fisheries problems before a subcommittee of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee in Stonington, Connecticut.¹⁴

In addition, AOFLA now co-sponsors Fisherman's Forum.

The Future

Concrete achievements of AOFLA are difficult to discern at this time. Gear conflicts remain a troublesome problem, though discussion is at least taking place. Foreign vessels continue to intrude into the United States exclusive fishing zone and, according to fishermen, frequently go unpunished. Foreign fleets continue to deplete traditional New England fishing grounds in the northwest Atlantic. Federal fishery money, directed toward solving critical industry problems, will

be limited if the budget proposals of President Nixon for fiscal year 1974 are approved intact.

Most importantly, AOFLA will require membership growth to survive. Mr. Allen recognizes the basic problem in this area:

The growth of an organization is an evolutionary process, but most people want to see what it can do before they will join. They fail to see that it can't do much without the membership base.¹⁵

The real need, according to Mr. Allen, is:

...to overcome the apathy, frustration, and disillusionment of fishermen with any attempt to influence fishery policy, primarily at the national level. Until the Atlantic Offshore Fish and Lobster Association can create the impression that it is having an input and getting some kind of response, its growth will be slow.¹⁶

As for the membership's feelings, 50% responded to the author's inquiries. One fourth expect AOFLA, in the words of one fisherman, "to fade out of existence, due to lack of interest as well as lack of progress".¹⁷ The fishermen in this group believe, for the most part, that AOFLA is making a valiant effort, but note that "fishermen hate to cooperate with one another"¹⁸ or that "stock declines"¹⁹ will bring about the association's demise. One third of the respondents indicated either a lack of sufficient knowledge upon which to base an evaluation, or no opinion at all. The rest of the respondents were enthusiastic

about AOFLA's potential, recognizing that its performance to date must be judged against the fact that it is a new organization, has limited membership, and has a shortage of financial resources.

The last point refers to the critical problem, money. AOFLA cannot expect Mr. Allen to devote substantial time to AOFLA if it cannot provide him with an adequate salary. Mr. Allen says that he now tries to "strike up a balance" between fishing and directing the organization, but admits that if he needed money he would have to go fishing and let matters ride. ²⁰ Since so much of the association's real work is carried out by Mr. Allen, his departure might very well mean the end of the association.

THE NEW ENGLAND FISHERIES STEERING COMMITTEE

The origins of the New England Fisheries Steering Committee can be traced to a December, 1969, National Marine Fisheries Service hearing in New Bedford, Massachusetts on proposed yellowtail flounder regulations. Present at the hearing was Gayle B. Charles, newly appointed office manager of the Provincetown Co-op.

By any standard Mr. Charles had an interesting background. Following receipt of a B.Sc. in Economics from Yale University, he served as third mate on a two year round-the-world yacht cruise. He then fulfilled his military obligation as a project engineer in the United

States Army Transportation Corps. In succeeding years he served as general manager of the African Coast Fishing Company, foreman of a South African trawling company, director of an advertising agency, and director of an industrial design consultants firm in Europe.

As a businessman, Mr. Charles was aware of the need for communication and cooperation among the units of any large scale enterprise. As an individual with a long standing interest in fisheries, he was familiar with the frustrations of New England commercial fishermen with state and federal fishery policies. He also saw a tendency of government at all levels to contact specific individuals and ports on regional issues because there was no single source for a New England position.

Mr. Charles approached individuals at the New Bedford hearing to assess the feasibility of an organizing effort which could provide a New England position. Some persons were sceptical. They remembered the failure of earlier organizing efforts and doubted the ability of the industry to effectively cooperate in its fragmented state. Others indicated a willingness to explore the idea further. Thus encouraged, Mr. Charles returned to Provincetown and forwarded invitations to an exploratory meeting in New Bedford on December 22, 1969.

Seventeen persons, representing the following ten New England fishery-related organizations, appeared at the

meeting:

1. Atlantic Fishermen's Union, New Bedford, Mass.
2. Chatham Seafood Cooperative, Chatham, Mass.
3. New Bedford Fisherman's Union, New Bedford, Mass.
4. New England Fisheries Association, Gloucester, Mass.
5. Point Judith Fishermen's CO-op Association, Galilee, Rhode Island.
6. Provincetown Cooperative Fishing Industries, Inc., Provincetown, Mass.
7. Seafood Producers' Association, New Bedford, Mass.
8. Seafood Workers Union, New Bedford, Mass.
9. Southern New England Fisherman's Association, Stonington, Conn.
10. United Fishermen's Wives Organization, New Bedford, Mass.

Also attending the meeting were representatives of the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Cape Cod Planning and Economic Development Commission, and the Law of the Sea Institute of the University of Rhode Island.

The minutes from the first meeting do not indicate that much time was devoted to formulating an organizational philosophy or an operating structure. Following the choice of Mr. Charles as acting chairman, the group proceeded to discuss various issues confronting the industry. This included the possible closing of a Massachusetts marine hospital, the serving of imported fish in school lunch programs, possible organizational support through a grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity, and the need for a two hundred mile exclusive fishing zone off the United States coast.

The last order of business was a suggestion that the group call itself the New England Fisheries Steering Committee (NEFSC).

Membership

NEFSC has two categories of membership, members and associate members. The latter are sometimes referred to as observers. Only a representative of a domestic fishery-related organization in New England can be a member and exercise voting rights. Though all the following have not paid their membership dues in full for 1973, and thus can not vote, the members of NEFSC are now:

1. Atlantic Offshore Fish and Lobster Association, Narragansett, R.I.
2. Boatowners United, New Bedford, Mass.
3. Boston Fisheries Association, Boston, Mass.
4. Chatham Seafood Cooperative, Chatham, Mass.
5. F.J. O'Hara & Sons Trawling Co., Boston, Mass.
6. M.F. Foley Company, Dorchester, Mass.
7. Maine Sardine Council, Augusta, Maine.
8. Massachusetts Lobsterman's Association, Marshfield Hills, Mass.
9. New Bedford Fisherman's Union, New Bedford, Mass.
10. New England Fisheries Association, Gloucester, Mass.
11. Point Judith Fishermen's Co-op Association, Galilee, Rhode Island.
12. Prelude Lobster Company, Westport Point, Mass.
13. Provincetown Co-op Fishing Industries, Inc., Provincetown, Mass.
14. Seafood Dealers Association, New Bedford, Mass.
15. Seafood Producers Association, New Bedford, Mass.
16. Seafood Workers Union, New Bedford, Mass.
17. Southern New England Fisherman's Association, Stonington, Conn.
18. United Fishermen's Wives Org., Inc., New Bedford, Mass.

An associate member may be "any person who is interested in the purposes of the New England Fisheries Steering Committee, such as an educator, scientist, or employee of federal,

state, or municipal governments". Associate members, or observers, currently represent:

1. Department of Natural Resources, Division of Marine Fisheries, Boston, Mass.
2. Gloucester Fisheries Commission, Gloucester, Mass.
3. Law of the Sea Institute, Kingston, R.I.
4. National Marine Fisheries Service, Gloucester, Mass.
5. State of Maine, Department of Sea and Shore Fisheries, Augusta, Maine.
6. University of Rhode Island Marine Advisory Service, Narragansett, R.I.

The associate member category was created to encourage non-industry involvement and the exchange of information and ideas, but such outside participation is not welcomed by all members. Several members indicated to the author irritation at the interruptions of associate members at NEFSC meetings, which turned the meetings into a "debating society" and obstructed problem solving.

It is difficult to decipher whether the members of NEFSC represent the New England commercial fishermen. Of approximately 150 fishermen from Maine to Rhode Island contacted by the author, the majority were unfamiliar with NEFSC. This included some who belong to organizations represented on the committee. One New Bedford fisherman said:

A majority of fishermen don't know NEFSC exists and could care less. It is just another group with more words and vacant promises.²²

It is not known whether this response would be duplicated

in a survey of all New England commercial fishermen. It is certainly worth further study, perhaps by NEFSC itself.

If many commercial fishermen are unfamiliar with NEFSC, this may be because member organizations are spread unevenly throughout the region. Two are headquartered in Rhode Island. Fourteen are from Massachusetts, six of these from New Bedford. One is from Maine, but the lobster industry, the state's largest fishery, is not represented. One Connecticut group is on the NEFSC mailing list, but has not recently been represented at meetings. New Hampshire is unrepresented.

It may be that the present members, in combination with associate members, do represent a cross section of the New England fishing industry and can speak authoritatively for it, but certainly the committee's claim to be the region's spokesman would be enhanced by broader geographical membership encompassing a wider range of industry groups and fishing activities.

There does not, however, appear to be an active recruitment drive. This may be due to the absence of a full-time NEFSC staff. Or, the opinion of one member that "everybody who is anybody is a member now" may be widely held. New membership may also be inhibited by a failure to follow up on recruitment suggestions. To illustrate, a suggestion for contact with the Sport Fishing Institute

was made at the February, 1971 meeting. The executive vice president of the Institute does not recall any such contact having been made, and adds:

I am quite willing to interface with the commercial fisheries interests on matters of mutual interest and concern, but feel that this would best be done informally rather than through some formal organizational structure.²³

Operating Structure

In February, 1972, Mr. Charles recommended that NEFSC be incorporated, but Massachusetts records do not indicate that this has been done. NEFSC does have by-laws, but they conflict with actual operations. For example, they speak of a principal office in New Bedford and a board of directors while, in fact, there is no permanent office and the board is really all NEFSC members.

Mr. Charles was the sole NEFSC officer until the first full slate, a chairman, vice chairman, secretary and treasurer, was elected in July, 1971. The committee was reorganized in 1972 to have a president, three vice presidents, a secretary, and a treasurer. One vice president is responsible for ICNAF matters and National Fishery Institute relations, another for vessel insurance and government relations, and a third for law of the sea. There is also a legislative task force, to formulate needed legislation, an incentive

fisheries management committee, and a recently appointed committee charged with the task of evaluating the proposed High Seas Fisheries Conservation Act of 1973 and S. 784-S. 789.

There is no full time NEFSC staff. A stenographer is employed for meetings, but most ongoing clerical services are performed by the staff of each member without NEFSC reimbursement.

Decisions of the committee appear to be made more often by consensus than by a count of hands. Some members indicated to the author that, because of the fragility of the organization and the unwillingness of people to encourage friction, some controversial issues never reach the floor and, if they do, no decision is reached.

Finances

In the early stages, NEFSC expenses were met individually by each member. There were no formal dues. It was not until September, 1971 that dues of \$25 for each member were instituted. Each member was billed \$100 in 1972 and 1973.

A recommendation was made at the first meeting in December, 1969 that additional financial support be sought from Action Group of New England, a branch of the Office of Economic Opportunity. Mr. Charles asserts that contacts

were made with the Boston OEO office requesting a two year regional grant of \$40-60,000 and that the office supported the proposal. However, when contact was then made with other local OEO offices to coordinate the grant, the other offices had heard nothing of it.²⁵ As a result, the regional grant approach fell apart. In its place, a grant was sought from the Community Action Committee of Cape Cod and Islands, Inc. In his request for funds, Mr. Charles stated:

What we are recommending is a strong group operating on a continuous basis which will be able to represent to federal and state officials and elected representatives the needs and views of the New England Fishing Industry. The interests of fishermen as a group, upon which a large part of the economy of many cities and towns depends, should particularly be taken into account.²⁶

Mr. Charles wanted the organization to be consulted in six essential areas:

1. Federal and state government: financial assistance, research and development, technical advice, conservation, licensing, pollution control;
2. Marketing: technical assistance in developing physical handling distribution systems, quality control, fish product improvements;
3. Insurance: hull and protection and indemnity markets, workmen's compensation improvements, health and pension schemes;
4. Mutual assistance: standards, techniques, operations, financing methods;
5. Education;
6. Vessel Design: initiating discussions with Naval architects to design and develop specifications for an optimum vessel for the New England inshore fishery.²⁷

The community action committee responded with a grant for \$5300, to be paid in quarterly installments through

1972. The Provincetown Co-op acted as the Contractor, presumably because NEFSC was unincorporated, and agreed to perform the following:

1. In cooperation with other United States fishery groups, seat an officially recognized delegate representing fisheries interests on the United States State Department 1973 Law of the Sea Conference negotiating team;
2. Formulate and implement a cohesive New England regional fisheries plan and program;
3. In cooperation with federal and state agencies, develop a national insurance and reinsurance program for fishing vessels applicable to the needs of various fisheries within the legal ramifications of the Jones Act.
4. In cooperation with the University of Rhode Island and MIT, evolve a frame of reference for a New England Fisheries management program in anticipation of a satisfactory conclusion of the 1973 Geneva Law of the Sea Conference.²⁸

The author was unable to gain access to the complete financial records of NEFSC, but it appears that much of this grant remains unused. Some of the money, in combination with collected dues, has been spent for clerical services, rental of meeting rooms, and the reimbursement of some members for NEFSC-related travel expenses. However, as of January, 1973, the NEFSC savings and checking accounts showed a combined balance of \$6,069.83.²⁹ This is several thousand dollars more than that which might reasonably have been collected from dues.

Meetings

Meetings have been held on a fairly regular monthly basis since NEFSC's inception, most in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Meeting rotation has recently been discussed. This might broaden the membership base as it would appear, for example, that Maine groups will be more likely to join if some meetings are held in accessible Maine ports.

Meeting procedure is rather informal. An agenda is prepared in advance, but discussion sometimes goes far afield of the immediate topic under consideration.

Few issues of interest to only one port or state are covered. This is largely because these issues, such as the use of imported fish in public schools or the 200 mile fishery jurisdiction claim of Massachusetts, are often of regional concern as well. Some regional issues can be resolved by common agreement within the industry, such as domestic pot lobster/dragger conflicts. Most issues, however, require legislative or administrative action at the state or federal level. These include such meeting topics as:

- 1. foreign fleet effort in the ICNAF area;
- 2. enforcement of the United States fishing zone against foreign vessels;
- 3. federal fishery loan programs;
- 4. state-federal fishery management programs;
- 5. offshore oil development and underwater aggregate mining;
- 6. funding for the National Marine Fisheries Service;

7. the value and implementation of Sea Grant programs;
8. progress in the Law of the Sea Preparatory meetings;
9. bilateral fishery negotiations;
10. overseas markets for United States fishery products;
11. FDA sanitation regulations;
12. federal high seas fisheries legislation;
13. restrictions on the importation of foreign-made vessels and gear.

An evaluation of member opinions on these issues and others is not always possible on the basis of meeting minutes. In the meetings attended by the author, there were several cases in which there was an apparent consensus during the formal meeting and this was noted in the minutes. After the meeting, however, individuals expressed disagreement in private conversations. Serious differences of opinion may be held back during formal sessions to avoid friction, and then worked out later in person-to-person contacts. The meeting minutes would not show this.

Accomplishments

It is difficult to distinguish independent accomplishments of NEFSC members from those of NEFSC itself. In any case, there are a number of NEFSC-related achievements. A regional representative of the National Marine Fisheries Service was requested and assigned to act as liaison with NEFSC. Industry-government communications have been further enhanced by the attendance at meetings of the Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Director of

Sea Grant program. Jacob Dykstra, a vice president of NEFSC, is a member of the United States Law of the Sea Delegation. Numerous segments of the industry pressed for such representation, but NEFSC must be given some of the credit. NEFSC is strongly represented on the ICNAF Industry Advisory Committee. The work of the NEFSC insurance committee contributed to the convening of a National Commercial Fishing Vessel Conference in Washington, D.C. in January, 1973. One member of NEFSC is credited with the background work for a United States Fisheries Trade Fair in Milan, Italy.³⁰ Other members worked closely with several United States Senators to bring about the submission of six fishery-related bills to the first session of the ninety-third Congress. These bills include proposals:

1. To reimburse American Fishermen for damages caused by foreign fishing vessels (S. 784);
2. To provide insurance against natural disasters which reduce or impair fish resources (S. 785);
3. To provide disaster insurance to the unemployed fishermen who suffered loss of income due to the "Red Tide" (S. 786);
4. To authorize a comprehensive program of funds, technical assistance, and marketing information (S. 787);
5. To provide that 100%, rather than 30%, of duties on fish imports be returned to the fishing industry (S. 788);
6. To provide for the promulgation of safety standards, loan guarantees to meet those standards, and loan guarantees to fishermen's marine insurance associations (S. 789).

At the March, 1973 meeting, Mr. Allen of AOFLA was asked to survey the opinion of Atlantic coast industry

groups on S. 784 - S. 789 and the High Seas Fisheries Conservation Act of 1973, H.R. 4760. The latter is a federal effort to achieve effective management jurisdiction over United States fishing vessels beyond the territorial sea. An NEFSC committee of six was created to formulate its response to the Senate and House bills. Together, these efforts will facilitate the development of a unified Atlantic coast response at hearings.

In March, 1972, NEFSC members met in Washington with the New England Congressional Delegation and elaborated upon the problems confronting the commercial fishing industry. They recommended the establishment of a New England Fishing Industry Advisory Board, similar to the New England River Basins Commission, which would be empowered to work for the revitalization of the fisheries. ³¹

In March, 1973, an NEFSC task force presented to the Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service a report "offering a plan of action...which...is basic to the recovery of the New England fisheries". ³² The report requests and supports in order of priority:

1. Rational resource management, both internationally and domestically;
2. Coastal nation preference for use of coastal resources;
3. Development of resource assessments and harvesting programs and markets for alternate species and present catch discards;
4. Solution to the insurance problems;
5. Appropriate and adequate financial assistance programs;

6. Creation of an equitable business atmosphere for the fishing industry;
7. Adequate technical assistance and advice;
8. Realignment of NEFSC to permit more immediate response capacity to solve short term problems; and to develop long-range programs with industry input;
9. Considerable industry involvement in planning and implementing Government sponsored programs.³³

The United States Revised Draft Fisheries Article, submitted before the Preparatory Committee for the upcoming Law of the Sea Conference, may, in part, be a response to a similar "species approach" proposal endorsed unanimously by NEFSC on May 4, 1971. The fact that other United States fishery groups also indicated support for the species approach prior to the issuance of the revised government position does not detract from the conclusion that NEFSC contributed to its official endorsement.

Even with these accomplishments, some members question the real effectiveness of NEFSC:

I think we are bogging down somewhat. We should take one issue at a time and give it all we have and try to accomplish something. We seem to be making a lot of meaningless noise...³⁴

We have been at this Steering Committee business for about three years now and I am beginning to hear rumblings about what we do.³⁵

Others question the ability of NEFSC to represent the New England commercial fishing industry when it meets only once a month, has inadequate financial resources, no permanent

staff, and no Washington lobbyist. One member is disenchanted with "the failure of some members to convince the fishermen of what is possible, rather than acting as just a conduit for fishermen's ideas".³⁶ Another member believes more could be accomplished if the meetings were not open to the press. In his view, this leads to grandstanding and misinterpretation by the public of NEFSC's work.

The Future

Some members believe NEFSC might fold without Mr. Charles' leadership. Much of the administration burden has been removed from his shoulders by the creation of three vice presidents, but he can not remain as president forever. He has responsibilities at the Provincetown Cooperative and these may eventually have to take precedence over NEFSC activities.

NEFSC's future will also depend upon funding a full time staff and permanent office. This will require more money than NEFSC now collects from dues, yet additional funding from Washington or the membership appears doubtful.

One member commented that "the future of NEFSC will depend upon the Law of the Sea Conference".³⁷ This is true in the sense that whatever happens there, the New England fishing industry must be prepared to respond. If the conference results in an extension of coastal state fishery jurisdiction, domestic fisheries management will become

more important and, if the industry wants to have some influence, it will have to formulate responsible positions. If the conference fails to reach agreement on fishery jurisdiction, the industry may wish to press harder for unilateral action by the United States. This too will take organization.

NEFSC's future effectiveness will also depend upon its membership base. If it does not broaden its scope to represent a broader geographical area and more fishermen, questions on its constituency will be raised. The problem here, however, is that many fishermen do not belong to any local or state organization and, therefore, can not be represented on NEFSC under its present structure.

The general membership opinion of NEFSC is that it has given some stability to industry leaders and, by bringing them together, increased each one's influence. The existence of NEFSC demonstrates that the industry can work together. As one member commented, "The fact that the committee even exists is the most remarkable achievement".³⁸

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The intent of this study was to detail several forms of fishery organizations in New England at the local, state, and regional level. It should be clear that a serious attempt is being made to bring fishermen together so that they might exert more influence upon decisions which affect their livelihood. It should be equally clear that organizing fishermen is not an easy task.

What is not clear is the direction the organizing movement will take in the future. The local groups studied may, like many others before them, die or lapse into impotence. The same holds true for state-wide organizations. Or, both may survive and prosper, forming a stronger base for regional efforts. If the regional efforts become stronger, the next step may be affiliation with a national fishermen's organization. This option is currently being discussed with a great deal of interest and may take one of three forms: (1) New England regional groups may seek to broaden their base by gradually bringing other United States groups under their banner; (2) local New England groups may affiliate with the National Fisheries Institute, now principally a processors organization, through the Institute's Regional Association Council; (3) local and

regional New England fishermen's groups may affiliate with the National Federation of Fishermen, now a largely Pacific coast organization, to create a national organization composed of an Eastern, Western, and Gulf division. Of the three alternatives, the last appears the most likely at this time.

The National Federation of Fishermen (NFF) has already contracted the services of two individuals, one from Maine and the other from Maryland, to manage an NFF office in Washington, D.C.¹ NFF proposes that each region choose a board of directors, from which there is elected five officers. The elected officers together would make up a national board of directors, which would subsequently elect national officers with an equitable distribution from each region.

Whether or not this, or any other national effort, succeeds in the near future, a beginning has been made in New England. Fishermen have been made aware that they must cooperate if their common interests are to be protected. As noted by the Editor of National Fisherman:

Too long fishermen have fought among themselves, or looked inwardly to their own local problems. But now they are seeing the inter-relation of their troubles with those of their fellow fishermen across the bay and across the nation. They are realizing that to survive they are going to have to unite, fighting for one another to protect the whole.

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It's a new concept in fisheries -
that bastion of rugged individualism -
but it's probably the only answer in a
world of giants, each striving for power
and security on a planet of limited
space and resources.

It's a heartening trend.²

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