Six

Scallywags, scoundrels and scum

Let us imagine, and I trust this will not be too much of a strain for our several imaginations, that we inhabit that kind of society of which the wealth appears as an immense accumulation of baked beans, bangers and mash, fish and chips, pints of beer, cups of tea, shoes, shirts and jeans, clocks, watches and measuring rods, beds, chairs, carpets, buildings, coal, plastic electrical fittings, transistor radios, television sets, motor cars, aeroplanes, and much more besides.

I shall ignore almost all of these items if only because I suspect that some of you may have a more sustained interest in them than I do... Baked beans, bangers and mash aren't available just now and we'll probably have to wait for the beer, which leaves us with fish and chips. Even if we can't eat them right now, we probably have eaten them in the not too distant past – so I shall assume that in referring to fish and chips without producing any for your inspection, you'll have some recollection, some past experience in everyday life which may assure you that I'm talking not about some figment of the theoretical imagination but something material, tangible, edible, and entirely susceptible to being grasped by all five senses or however many it is you think you have today.

Whether fish and chips are dialectically interrelated such that the existence and development of the one is the condition for the existence and development of the other or not is for others to determine, or perhaps we can all chip in and sort it out as we go along.

One way of discovering whether there is a dialectical interrelationship between two items is to try to separate them. Let me try. Let me see how far it is possible for me to talk about the processes which seemingly occur before I can force my teeth through the defensive wall known as batter into the fillet of cod, haddock or plaice without having to say anything about potatoes.

Let me admit to a strong wish to avoid talking about potatoes because that discussion almost invariably leads either in the direction of ground rent, the 'so-called Ricardian law of rent', the distinction between Absolute rent and Differential rent, and the 'Economic Consequences of Changes in the Organic Composition of Agricultural Capital', or to endless speculations about what was going on in all those sacks of potatoes dotted around the French countryside in the middle of the 19th Century. All this and much more besides I gladly leave others to discuss, analyse and comment on. For myself, holding a picture of a haddock in one hand and a map of the North Sea in the other, I shall retreat to the opening sentences of that curious 19th Century treatise on the organisation of fishing in the British Isles, variously entitled *A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production: A Critique of Political Economy* and occasionally, *Capital Vol. 1.*

> The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as an immense accumulation of commodities, its unit being the single commodity. [One fish and chips please.] Our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of a commodity.

Perhaps, however, we personally don't want to undertake the task of analysing a commodity. It could turn out to be much more laborious and time-consuming than simply consuming it; by the time we'd completed our analysis of the commodity we might be very hungry indeed and the fish cold and unpalatable. So I shall do what perhaps we most often do in these circumstances and simply assume the analysis of a commodity, always provided that we have taken the elementary precaution of discovering first what constitutes a commodity, the analysis of which we are assuming.

> A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference. Neither are we concerned to know how the object satisfies these wants, whether directly as a means of subsistence, or indirectly as means of production.

I do find it reassuring to learn that fish can indeed be subsumed under the comprehensive category of commodity both ways; either as satisfying wants that spring from the stomach or as those which spring from

fancy. It's also something of a relief to discover that I needn't be concerned to know whether the fish is going to end up as a means of subsistence or a means of production, more especially when I consider that as soon as I enquire how I came to have the fish in my hand or between my teeth, it must have started as a means of production. The word 'production' seems to have crept back into the discourse again, this time without its usual attendants, 'mode of' and 'process of'. Perhaps I should go back to the beginning and try to discover just what I'm letting myself in for if I'm going to assume the analysis of a commodity.

If I wish to investigate some part of social life, however small and insignificant, in a society in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, and if I then accept the assertion that the wealth of such a society 'presents itself as an immense accumulation of commodities' it seems inevitable that I must either analyse a commodity myself, which I'm most reluctant to do, or persuade someone else to do it. Being a trusting kind of chap, always ready to go beyond the call of contract in the study of wealth and power not to mention work and organisation, I much prefer to leave the analysis of a commodity in the capable hands of others. However, just in case I get the ethnographic trawl caught fast on some invisible object on the bed of the theoretical ocean, I do think it is as well to have some inkling of the premises on which this analysis of a commodity is constructed. This is all the more important for someone as timorous as me, because this somewhat decrepit 19th Century apparatus which I'm proposing to use and which may be all very well in its way provided I'm dealing with simple, not to say perhaps simple-minded 19th Century, independent commodity producers making up the great mass of the British fishing nation. But I'm less well suited to grappling with such monsters of 20th Century social science fiction as *Labour and Monopoly Capitalism*, *Late Capitalism*, *The Class Structure of Advanced Societies*, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, *Economy and Class Structure*, *Consciousness and Action Among the Western Working Class*, or *Marx's Capital and Capitalism Today*.[1] Perhaps I should read the terms of the insurance policy I'm taking out, even if I'm not sure exactly what cover I'm going to get.

> As a general rule, articles of utility, [for example, fish] become commodities because they are products of the labour of private individuals or groups of individuals who carry on their work independently of one another... (*Capital Vol I*: 72–7)

(So – people who catch fish, fisher persons, by virtue of their labour as private individuals or groups of individuals somehow or other transform these articles of undoubted utility, fish, into commodities, provided, that is, that they carry on their work independently of one another and the rest of the population. I am led to wonder whether this statement contains veiled hints at a division of labour, or relations of production or possibly both.)

> [Now] The sum total of the labour of all these private individuals forms the aggregate labour of society.
>
> [Because] the producers do not come into social contact with one another until they exchange their products, the specific social character of each producer's labour does not show itself except in the act of exchange. In other words the labour of the individual asserts itself as a part of the labour of society, only by means of the relations which the act of exchange established directly between the products, and indirectly through them, between the producers. To the latter, therefore, the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between people at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things.

(So – the relations between fish, nets, ice, iron and steel ships, boxes, the floor of the fish market, and the rubber soles of the fish salesmen's boots are the social relations which connect the fishermen, provided that they are independent commodity producers, and the relations between fishermen, fish salesmen, and fish buyers are the material relations between them as persons (human beings if you prefer).

> ...It is only by being exchanged that the products of human labour acquire, as values, one uniform social status, distinct from their varied forms of existence as objects of utility...

(On this analysis, it is not the act of catching the fish but of exchanging them, which constitutes them as commodities.)

> ...This diversion of a product into a useful thing and a value becomes practically important only when exchange has acquired such an extension that useful articles are produced for the purpose of being exchanged, and their character as values has to be taken into account, beforehand – during production. From

> this moment, the labour of the individual producer acquires socially a two-fold character. On the one hand, it must, as a definite useful kind of labour satisfy a definite social want...

(I am not alone in wanting to eat fish, with or without chips.)

> ...and thus hold its place as part and parcel of the collective labour of all as a branch of a social division of labour that has sprung up spontaneously.

(I will remark in passing that to postulate a 'social division of labour that has sprung up spontaneously' doesn't necessarily stop anyone from seeking to examine how subsequent developments of that division of labour take place.)

> ...On the other hand it can satisfy the manifold wants of the individual producer himself, only in so far as the mutual exchangeability of all kinds of useful private labour is an established social fact...

(An assertion which has a splendidly Durkheimian ring to it.)

> ...and therefore the private useful labour ranks on an equality with that of all others.

(Now comes what may turn out to be the crunch clause in this particular policy, although the print in which it appears is not noticeably smaller than the rest.)

> The equalisation of the most different kinds of labour can be the result only of an abstraction from their inequalities, or of reducing them to their common denominator, viz. expenditure of human labour-power or human labour in the abstract.

(So the study of work, of the division of labour, of occupations and all that goes with them may proceed, provided, that is, that we are prepared on occasions to perform and maintain a decent abstraction from the inequalities of different kinds of labour. To speak of different kinds of labour is to imply distinctions between, and divisions of, labour. Indeed, I suggest that this is exactly the kind of analysis of a commodity which will be useful and can be defensibly assumed if my investigations are immediately concerned with labour, with work, and with divisions of labour rather than with commodities per se. Moreover if we pursue this line of analysis I may be in line for a bonus.)

> The two-fold social character of the labour of the individual appears to him, when reflected in his brain, only under those forms which are impressed upon that labour in everyday practice

> by the exchange of products. In this way, the character that his own labour processes have of being socially useful takes the form of the condition that the product must be not only useful, but useful for others, and the social character that his particular labour has of being the equal of all other particular kinds of labour, takes the form that all the physically different articles that are the product of labour, have one common quality, namely that of having value.

(Please address any remarks you may wish to make about that last assertion to Joan Robinson or to Barry Hindess and not to me. However, given that that baffling term 'value' has thrust itself uninvited into our midst, let me utter a few more incantations which may serve, if not to exorcise it, then to pacify it: conceptual fish heads for the theoretical cat).

> All commodities are non-use values for their owners and use–values for their non-owners. Consequently, they must all change hands. But this change of hands is what constitutes their exchange, and the latter puts them in relation with each other as values, and realises them as values.

(So next time you find yourself holding hands with someone you'll know that you're putting yourself in relation with each other as values and realising one another as values.)

> ...Hence commodities must be realised as values before they can be realised as use-values.

(Only goes to show what changing hands can do; not only realisation as values but realisations as use-values while we're at it. Surely there must be some snag in all this. Remember that the last assertion was that 'commodities must be realised as values before they can be realised as use-values. Now it may turn out that the relationship between values and use-values, unlike that between fish and potatoes, is a dialectical one, once we consider the other hand – so let's do that straight away.)

> On the other hand [commodities] must show that they are use-values before they can be realised as values. For the labour spent upon [producing] them counts effectively only in so far as it is spent in a form that's useful for others. Whether that labour is useful for others, and its product consequently capable of satisfying the wants of others, can only be proved by the act of exchange...

Finally, in all this, the proposition that

> In proportion as exchange bursts its local bonds, and the value of commodities more and more expands into an embodiment of human labour in the abstract, in the same proportion the character of money attaches itself to commodities that are by Nature fitted to perform the social function of a universal equivalent. These commodities are the precious metals.

Which inevitably leads me by a route which I find hard and you may find even harder to follow to the Aberdeen fishing industry. Just goes to show what precious metals can do even to the best of us.

My attempts to observe, comprehend, describe, and examine the Aberdeen fishing industry in the mid-twentieth Century were in various ways unsatisfactory but not I hope entirely uninformative or unsuccessful. I had little difficulty in making some kinds of observations and in securing all manner of apparently useful information from numerous people, many of them working in the industry and others who were not but who, nevertheless, were very knowledgeable about it. Moreover, it wasn't too difficult to hit upon, as a first approximation to a problem for investigation, the changing conditions of recruitment to the industry. Even if this way of formulating a problem turned out to be mistaken and to lead into a cul–de–sac, at least it provided some kind of focus for my enquiries until I hit upon something more promising. Grasping the Owl of Minerva by the tail feathers and bringing the wisdom of hind – sight to bear, if that's what learning from mistakes is, I'm now inclined to say that I was trying to reduce too readily a large number of more or less observable social processes in which people were involved in everyday life, and which were likely to be interrelated in complex ways, to a limited set of processes, processes which I took, or mistook, to be fundamental processes, underlying those of which I and other people could have direct personal experience and which, consequently, we could observe. Thus I sought to relate the division of labour on fishing vessels directly to what I thought I knew about the relations of production, capitalist relations of production on the one hand, and the level of development of the forces of production on the other. I suspected that I would be able to investigate, without too much difficulty, class structure and social stratification.

However, it didn't take all that much in the way of comprehending other people's descriptions of what happens when three or four men are

trying to get the trawl doors, the tickler chain, the net, and the cod-end full of small rocks, seaweed, and miscellaneous bits of iron, together with a few flapping fish, aboard in half a gale to suggest that this particular division of labour was unlikely to derive directly from 'the existing relations of production', still less from an analysis of 'what is but a legal expression for the same thing – the property relations within which the material productive forces of Society – [fishing vessels, nets and especially the skill of the fisherman] – have been at work hitherto'. Class structure doesn't necessarily reveal itself clearly and unambiguously at the point of production.

Nevertheless, there was what I took to be evidence of an 'antagonistic form of the social processes of production' and plenty of indications of what I at least was prepared to regard as 'ideological forms', in which men, fishermen among them, were becoming conscious of some kind of conflict and fighting it out. Where I think I probably went wrong was in being too ready to assume that the bourgeoisie had already succeeded in revolutionising the instruments of production and thereby the relations of production, at least in this particular branch of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Nor had the proletarianisation of the direct producers, the fishermen, proceeded as far as casual consideration of who owned the fishing fleet had led me to suppose.

Of course I can, and so I will, point out that I was not alone in supposing that the centralisation and concentration of capital in this particular branch of production was virtually complete, such that a small number of limited companies owning all the means of production on the one side confronted a bunch of propertyless labourers accordingly compelled to sell the one commodity at their disposal, their labour power, on the other.

The report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Fishing Industry published in 1961 confidently asserted that:

> A considerable sum is required to keep any but small inshore trawlers at sea, quite apart from the initial building cost, and the ownership of the near, middle and distant water trawl fleet is almost entirely vested in fishing companies, often of considerable size.

Indeed, during the ten years after the publication of that report there were a number of amalgamations of some of the largest of these fishing

companies which subsequently disappeared into even larger conglomerates. The effect of all this upon the division of labour on trawlers, and especially Aberdeen fishing vessels seems, however, to have been negligible, at least over the next decade. Perhaps more to the point and irrespective of what the members of the Select Committee of Enquiry and their investigators may have observed, many of the people who told me about the fishing industry in Aberdeen, described it in very similar terms. However it may have been in the late 19th Century and the first four decades of the 20th Century, by the 1950s a small group of men who knew nothing about fishing and cared even less, owned the fishing fleet which they had bought in the hope of Government subsidies. The crews of the vessels consisted largely, some said entirely, of Scallywags, Scoundrels and Scum; the dregs; of rascals and rogues; hooks, crooks and comic singers; layabouts; the unemployable; the feeble, the fat, the soft in the head; jailbirds and convicted criminals – in short 'the dangerous class, the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of our society or lumpen-proletariat, in search not of wages, still less work, but of backhanders and bribes.

Further enquiries completely failed to elicit why even the most philanthropic of owners of some of the means of production should have handed over their valuable property, not to speak of backhanders i.e. cash, to crews consisting entirely of drunken scallywags. Perhaps they didn't. Even if they did, yet more enquiries similarly failed to establish how drunken scallywags managed to sail these clapped out rusty vessels out of Aberdeen harbour in the first place, never mind perform considerable feats of navigation in reaching the fishing grounds and of seamanship in fishing the grounds in unfavourable weather and then to cap it all, find their way back to Aberdeen with a hold full of marketable fish.

One possibility is that there were, in addition to the indifferent owners of these means of production, the fishing vessels, and their drunken scallywag crews, a few real fishermen. Now this may sound a little like someone, for instance me, postulating an imaginary category of agents to rescue an analysis fast falling into disrepair. Let me then hasten to say that it wasn't me that thought up these fishermen, but various helpful and often knowledgeable people connected with the industry. Some of them were fishermen themselves, or had been, others the wives, mothers, fathers, brothers, sons, daughters and friends of fishermen, or men and women, who worked in other branches of the industry.

Indeed once I had identified this new category virtually everyone I encountered could provide me with at least the names and addresses of several real fishermen. True, most of these addresses weren't in Aberdeen, and certainly if I called at these addresses I could be fairly sure that I wouldn't find them at home. Being fishermen, real fishermen, they were always at sea, except at hogmanay, when they, and for that matter, I, had something else to do.

I seem to be on the very edge of either imagining or discovering new elements in the division of labour in fishing, or possibly even a division of labour based on entirely different principles, one which divides those engaged in the fishing industry in Aberdeen and NE Scotland into the owners of fishing vessels, scallywags and real fishermen. The division of labour in society, at least in a society in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, yields the primary categories of capitalism, the owner of the means of production, and of proletarian wage–labourer; it doesn't, however, give rise directly to the distinction and divisions between skippers and mates on the one hand and deckhands on the other, nor to the distinction and possible divisions between real fishermen and scallywags. Moreover the division of labour when a fishing vessel is at sea gives rise to distinctions between those who are respectively on the bridge, on deck, in the fish-hold, in the galley, in the engine-room and in their kips; distinctions which are very different when the vessel is steaming to and from the fishing grounds from those which occur when fishing. It doesn't however seemingly provide the basis for allocating the responsibility for performing various tasks to one individual rather than another when several are similarly qualified to perform them. There may for instance in a crew of twelve be two or even three men who hold skipper's certificates, another two who hold 'second hands', that is mate's, certificates, and three or four who hold 'second fishermans' tickets.

Nor does this division of labour in the sea-going workshop seemingly give rise to the distinction and possible division between scallywags and real fishermen.

Perhaps then this distinction is, if not a figment of my imagination or that of someone else, then one of those distorted ideological forms of social consciousness which bear little or no relationship to reality, social reality.

Let me therefore summarise the qualities imputed to real fishermen and to scallywags respectively and the conditions which might generate them.

Real fishermen are born fishermen. They have the sea in their blood. You have to be born and bred to it. Real fishermen are born into families in which most men are fishermen and most women are married to fishermen. Their fathers, and their fathers before them were fishermen. Their mothers were the daughters of fishermen. Their uncles are fishermen. Their aunts are married to fishermen. Their male cousins are fishermen. Their sisters marry fishermen. Their sons will become fishermen. (So far you could say much the same for, say, mining – 'real' miners that is.) Among all these kin some will own, often jointly, some part of the means of production; a share in a fishing vessel, nets, lines, hooks, sinkers, and knowledge of the fishing grounds, and of fish. (This you could not say of coal mining, though you could make comparable claims in farming.) Real fishermen as schoolboys go to sea with fathers, uncles and elder brothers in flagrant defiance of the Merchant Shipping Act of 1894. As soon as they can, and often before the statutory minimum school leaving age, they sign on as ships' apprentices or deckhand learners. They seek every opportunity to gain experience of fishing, sit their second fisherman's ticket at the age of 21, their mate's certificate at 23, and their skipper's certificate at 25. If they don't come from a family which has a share in a fishing vessel, they do everything possible to find a patron who will get them a job as a mate, and then as a skipper. They'll fish in the worst weather to establish themselves as successful skippers landing the greatest weight of fish, week in and week out.

Some are unfortunate. Through poor eyesight, or other disability, or injury whilst at sea, they are forced to seek less exacting employment in the industry or even outside it, but their tie with fishing, though impaired, is never severed. Real fishermen live, eat, drink, sleep, and dream fishing and fish. Getting in among the fish, the quantity of fish, the quality of fish, the difficulties overcome in catching the fish, the calamities often but not always avoided in fishing, the reputations of other fishermen are constantly matters for conversation, discussion and dispute. Elderly men, long since retired from the sea, still go down to the fish dock most mornings when there is a landing. Others must move away from the sea altogether so that they can't see or smell it.

You could say that for real fishermen, fishing is a way of life, that they inhabit a fishing community. Fishing is a vocation, a calling. Some have more skill than others; some perhaps have more luck than others; not all real fishermen are good fishermen; some are poor fishermen. None are bad fishermen.

Scallywags are bad fishermen. Scallywags are born and grow up in the slums of Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow. They have no wish to go to sea, no sense of what it takes even to be a poor fisherman. They have no connection with the sea, still less with fishing. They leave school as soon as possible and drift from job to job as errand boys, teaboys on building sites, factory labourers. They're always in trouble of one sort or another. They're signed on for the price of a couple of drinks, the promise of more from the ship's bonded store once she's sailed, and a backhander. The hope of backhanders and the cheap drink in the bonded store is all they do it for.

At sea they're idle, useless, worse than useless. They're scared, or sick, or both. They can't be trusted to take a watch on the bridge on the way to the fishing grounds. They're a danger to everyone handling the gear when the trawl is being shut or brought back aboard. They can't mend nets. They're not all that much use with a knife, gutting fish.

They're quarrelsome. They're trouble makers. That's the one thing they can be relied on for. They'll pick fights if they can, and stir it up for others if they can't. One scallywag aboard can get everyone else against one another. They really are bad buggers.

Once ashore again, they lose no time in spending the pay that other men have earned for them. They get drunk, often fighting drunk. They refuse to sail, even though they're still signed on. They appear in the Sheriff's Court chargedwith contravening Part IV Section 127 of the Merchant Shipping Act of 1894, and unable or unwilling to pay the fine, are sentenced to 7 or 14 days imprisonment in Aberdeen Gaol. From there, in all likelihood, a harassed ship's runner has to retrieve them by paying the outstanding fines, otherwise the fishing vessel [without a full] complement, will be unable to sail.

Put slightly differently, and in more general terms...

> ...the labour process, turned into the process by which the capitalist consumes labour power, exhibits two characteristic phenomena. First, the labourer works under the control of the capitalist to whom his labour belongs; the capitalist taking good care that the work is done in a proper manner, and that the means of production are used with intelligence, so that there is no unnecessary waste of raw material, and no wear and tear of the implements beyond what is necessarily caused by the work.

(Plainly there is scope for continuing education among the sea-going lumpen–proletariat of Aberdeen before they grasp this.)

> ...Secondly, the product is the property of the capitalist and not that of the labourer, its immediate producer.

(There would seem to be comparable scope for further education among the real fishermen of NE Scotland.)

> Meanwhile, for our instruction I'll produce the assertion that...
>
> Just as the commodities are, at the same time, use-values and values, so the process of producing them must be a labour process, and at the same time, a process of creating values.

an assertion which led someone else to the assertion, in a footnote, that...

> The English language has two different expressions for these two different aspects of labour; in the simple labour process, the process of producing use-values, it is work; in the process of creation of value, it is labour, taking the term in its strictly economic sense. (Engels)

Thus the earlier distinction in ideological form between scallywags and real fishermen reappears in 19th Century political economy, the disdain of the real fishermen and their friends for the scallywags and the contempt of the scallywags and their friends for the real fishermen, as the disdain of the use-value producing worker following his vocation for the value creating labourer, and conversely the contempt of the productive value-creating labourer for the vocation-following, use-value producing worker.

So far, I have only mentioned in passing some of the terms commonly used in general discussions of the division of labour on trawlers sailing out of Aberdeen. Most Aberdeen trawlers are and were between 90' and 120' in length. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the coal-fired steam trawlers, some of which had been built in the first decade of the 20th Century, for the most part fished the nearer fishing grounds in the North Sea or off the West coast of Scotland. Vessels fishing the nearer grounds usually had somewhat smaller crews, – 10, 11 and sometimes even 9 – than the same vessels, and also the converted oil-fired steam trawlers, and the more recently built motor trawlers, shipped, when fishing further afield off Faroe and the coast of Norway when they carried crews of 12, 14 and even 15.

The crew consisted of a certificated skipper who was entirely responsible in law for the safety of the ship and her crew, a certificated second hand or mate; a second fisherman; four or more deckhands and

deckhand-trimmers, one of whom may have signed on as a cook; a chief engineer; and sometimes, but by no means invariably, a second engineer.

The skipper decided which grounds he would fish. He might and often did consult the ship's owners or their factors because the choice of fishing ground affected the number of crew and the quantity of ship's stores required, but the final decisions about which grounds to fish, when and how, were his, as was the choice of port of landing for the catches.

During the journey to the fishing grounds, which may have been as little as twenty or thirty miles, or as much as four or five hundred miles, and also on the return trip, the responsibility of navigating the vessel was most often shared between the skipper and the mate, watch on, watch off, with a deckhand also on the bridge, watch on, watch off. There was a similar arrangement in the engineroom. The mate was responsible for what in other kinds of workshop would be called discipline among the workers, and labourers, except in the engine room where the chief engineer ruled.

Thus sailing the vessel to and from the grounds required no more than eight men; four men watch on, and four watch off. It could be and often was accomplished with fewer.

Once fishing commenced, a different division of labour appeared. The skipper is now on the bridge alone, preaching sermons to his assembled congregation on the deck below. The mate and second fisherman have special responsibilities for checking and launching the complicated tangle of cod-end, net, tickler, chains, trawl doors and warps and for retrieving them when they are brought back alongside.

The second fisherman has to ensure that the cod-end is brought fair and square over the fish pound on the fore-deck, and as soon as this is done, sets about repairing the net.

The gear must be put back over the side and fishing resumed as soon as possible.

Meanwhile the mate and deckhands not handling the gear start to gut the fish. They are joined by the second fisherman and remaining deckhands as soon as fishing has been resumed.

The mate now disappears into the fish hold to pack the fish away on shelves with ice, sometimes taking a deckhand with him to break up the

ice and help pack the fish. From now on, the mate is responsible for the quality of the fish until the fish market porters dump the fish in boxes on the floor of the fish market for the fish salesmen to sell. Mates often prefer to supervise the unloading of the fish, 'their' fish, themselves rather than leave these tender morsels to the rough hands and even rougher picks and shovels of the porters.

Bringing trawl gear and trawls aboard in seas which are almost never less than choppy and often decidedly rough requires muscle power, skill and judgement if fishermen are not to lose fingers, hands, arms and even lives. Gutting fish once aboard is unskilled labour, of the most unpleasant and monotonous kind, often performed under difficult conditions.

As navigators, the skipper and mate perform mental labour of a kind which requires both specialised training and considerable practical experience. They hold certificates of competence issued by the Board of Trade, subsequently the DTI, and they can and do lose these if they show themselves incompetent as seamen and navigators, for instance by stranding their ship. Certification by agencies of the state, the authoritative definition of some men as competent to perform certain tasks thus constitutes another important *Element in the Division of Labour*. This, however, is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of the effective division of labour between skippers and mates on the one hand and the rest of their crews on the other, and hence of the definition of skippers and mates as a distinct occupation in fishing. Skippers and mates must also display their success as fishermen if they are to secure and retain positions as skipper and mate. Many mates have a valid skipper's certificate in their pockets, and sometimes the cook in the galley has a mate's or skipper's certificate – his own – in his pocket. Skippers and mates on successful vessels make between five and eight times as much per trip as deckhands, and on especially successful trips, ten to twelve times as much. There is a great deal of competition between these qualified, certificated labourers to secure positions as skippers and mates.

Ownership of a fishing vessel doesn't imply command of the vessel, doesn't entitle the owner to act as skipper. Only if an owner holds a valid skipper's ticket can he assume command of his own vessel. Thus the non-certificated owners of the means of production, fishing vessels, fishing gear and other equipment, provisions and ship's stores, do not possess the means of production of which they dispose in the process

of production in the same way that the owners of factories in manufacturing industries or the proprietors of firms in building and construction do.

This division of labour between the owners of the means of production, fishing vessels and gear on the one hand, and the owners of labour power on the other, must therefore occur outside the floating sea-going workshop, the trawler, and if not aboard, then ashore. It is, presumably, a division of labour in society, and one which does presuppose certain kinds of relations of production, capitalist ones.

Now where do the scallywags, the sea-going lumpen-proletariat fit into these various divisions of labour? I shall assume, on the basis of almost unlimited evidence, that the skippers and mates, as qualified navigators and seamen, wish them elsewhere, preferably in Aberdeen Gaol.

Once fishing commences, matters are very different and the more successful the fishing trip the greater the necessity for these sea-going members of the lumpen-proletariat. On a building site, say, or a dockyard, or a factory in a town, when additional unskilled labour is required, the foreman, if all else fails, sticks his fingers in his mouth and simply whistles up the casual labourers, the passing lumpen-proletariat, the local members of the industrial reserve army. You can whistle for all your worth for a very long time in the middle of the North Sea without attracting a single proletarian, lumpen or otherwise.

In this branch of production then, the owners, the skippers, the mates and the rest of the real fishermen are constrained to transport their additional unskilled labour to and from the place of production, and pay them, if not very much, for all the time they spend away from the quayside.

Skippers and mates, and even more, owners and their direct agents are bound to the scallywags, the casual labourers necessary for the production of values, by a fearful necessity which, or so it seems, arises from relations of capitalist commodity production. Speaking of scallywags and capitalist relations of production, what about real fishermen and relations of simple commodity production – production by producers who really care about use-values?

The answer has to be that they've been doing very well thank you. Following a vocation as they do, and what's more, a vocation which doesn't provide much opportunity for conspicuous consumption of a

personal kind, they do tend to accumulate. They accumulate, initially, money. Often if not always, that money goes towards the purchase of means of production, shares in fishing vessels, nets, other equipment. One bible will last a life-time; even a seine net which is not trawled wears out very quickly.

Real fishermen, if they don't inherit, and have no prospects of inheriting means of production, enter the capitalist process of production, trawl fishing, but they do so with the intention of joining the ranks of independent simple commodity producers, as owner-skippers, mates, and come to that, deckhand owners of small fishing cables (boats) and larger seine-netters, drifters, even trawlers.

The continued existence and even growth in NE Scotland of this brand of independent, simple commodity producers, this sea-going Protestant petty bourgeoisie could be an accident, a historical fluke. It could be, and I cannot demonstrate that it isn't. I can't think of a test of statistical significance which could be applied to settle the matter. However, I can refer to theoretical considerations which may be relevant in all this.

In most branches of production – textiles, coal mining, engineering, vehicle manufacture, food processing – where capitalist enterprises develop and begin to expand, they can force the smaller independent producers, however efficient, either to expand and become capitalist enterprises themselves, willy nilly, or to contract, either literally, as subordinate contractors of larger enterprises, or to the point of going out of business altogether, to the point of extinction, of ceasing to be producers.

At the same time, and perhaps at an ever–increasing rate, labour, at first subsumed *formally* under capitalist relations of production is subsumed *really*, substantively. The techniques and methods of working, of producing, are transformed. The workshop is transformed into a *capitalist* workshop, a production unit operating *directly* under capitalist production relations.

In this one branch of production, but perhaps also in some others, however much labour and the labour process may be *formally* subsumed under capitalist relations of production, the *real* subsumption of labour and the labour process under some *other* set of production relations, for instance simple commodity production relations, remains a possibility, a *real* possibility, indefinitely.

This is not, I suggest, due to the peculiar stubborness of fishermen, *real* fishermen in NE Scotland. On the contrary, it is the peculiar stubborness of the *real* fishermen in NE Scotland, or rather the basis of that stubbornness which has to be explained.

This basis, I suggest, exists in the peculiar stubborness of the means of production, or some of them; their refractory character; their resistance to becoming means of production which individuals or companies can own in their entirety.

In most branches of production it is possible for capitalists to appropriate all the means of production. It is this circumstance that renders possible the concentration and centralisation of capital, of the establishment of the complete control of *capitalist* relations of commodity production over all other relations of production, including simple commodity production.

In the particular branch of production with which I've been especially concerned, the fishing industry, it is impossible to appropriate *all* the means of production. No matter how wealthy you are, you can't own all the fish in the sea. *Real* fishermen know this very well from experience and it is this which forms the basis, the real basis, of their stubborn resistance, as *independent* simple commodity producers, to capitalist commodity production.

It may seem to you 'paradoxical to assert that uncaught fish, for instance, are a means of production in the fishing industry'. However, as our man in the Reading Room of the British Museum long ago remarked:

> Hitherto no one has discovered the art of catching fish in waters that contain none.