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## Report From Britain, 18 March 1950

James W. (James Wesley) Silver (1907-1988)

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REPORT FROM BRITAIN  
James W. Silver  
Chairman, Department of History  
University, Mississippi

Aberdeen, Scotland  
March 18, 1950

If you don't watch it over here, you will get kippered herring for breakfast, steamed cod for lunch, and broiled filet of sole for dinner. Naturally a guy who has spent many a day on Sardis Lake only to bring home a purchased catfish wonders where all these fish come from. So, for six months I have watched with the jealous eye of a landlubber the trawlers making their way into Aberdeen Harbor and the fish market and have beamed with anticipation at the thought of catching 200 tons of cod, halibut, haddock, salmon, whitefish, herring, flounder, and blackjack on a single trip.

Something always seems to be coming up to postpone my projected trip on one of the trawlers. There is an old saying around these parts that the breezes which come off the North Sea make a lazy wind that doesn't bother to go around, just goes right through you. Which reminds me of the comment of an old negro in Mississippi who heard some of us discussing a blustery March wind coming apparently out of the south: "That ain't no South wind, mister, that's just a North wind goin' home."

The North Sea can be a rough and tough place. Only yesterday, I talked with the skipper of a trawler which had battled its way back from Russian waters in nine days. While his nets were out, the Commies had decided to carry out air maneuvers with live ammunition in the vicinity, and on the way home through high seas and heavy snow, the bow of the ship was bashed in by one high wave. Two days at home, though, and the crew would take off for another month's venture in the eternal quest for fish to help keep alive fifty million Britishers.

Here are a few authentic headlines I have clipped from the local paper in the past six weeks or so -- they may indicate why the younger generation becomes somewhat hesitant about taking up a seafaring existence:

FOUR ABERDEEN MEN SWEEPED TO DEATH. Trawler ships big sea off Iceland. Mate sees son go overboard. ---FULL FORCE OF STORM LASHES FOR HEBRIDES. Wind gusts up to 100 miles per hour. Trawlers marooned. ---PETERHEAD DRIFTER LOST IN NORTH SEA COLLISION. Hole "Big enough to take

a car." Crew saves nets. ---14 RESCUED BY BREECHES BUOY. Fishermen drag youth from sea when line snaps. ---VESSEL SMASHED ON SHETLAND ROCKS. ---CARRIER RACES TO CRIPPLED COASTER. Hove-to in 60 mph gale. Water pouring in engine room.

CREW OF FAROESE TRAWLER TELL OF ARCTIC RESCUE. Four men and dog thrown into sea when life-boat sinks. ---THREE DAY ORDEAL FOR TRAWLER. Grenada reaches Aberdeen after battling high seas. ---SIX DEAD, SIX MISSING AS SHIP SINKS. Vessel's back broken in gale. Three lifeboats rescue 25. ---TRAWLER'S CREW WINS THROUGH. After 24 hours of bailing and pumping to keep afloat, the exhausted crew of the Carthusian reached Aberdeen last night.

COASTER BRIGHTSIDE ON ROCKS IN DENSE FOG. Crew picked up. ---TWO DANISH FISHERMEN LOST IN SHIPWRECK. Ran on sandbank in fog. ---FOUR SURVIVORS OF SUNKEN SHIP. 20 of crew lost. ---SHIP DISABLED 86 MILES OFF WICK. Three vessels race to aid. ---TRAWLER LOST WITH FIVE MEN. Fourteen rescued. ---TRAWLER REFLOATED AFTER GROUNDING. ---CREW'S TWELVE HOURS OF "SHEER HELL."

Some weeks ago a message asking for medical advice was flashed to the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary from a trawler riding out a storm 100 miles out to sea. A fisherman had been injured so severely that the doctors decided he must be rushed to shore for an immediate operation. But mountainous seas crashing against the Aberdeen breakwaters made entrance to the harbor impossible and the trawler had to make for Peterhead. The man died at sea.

You can't help thinking of these things when you go down to the market, early in the morning, to see a half mile of fish spread out on boxes and auctioned off exactly as is tobacco in the marts of the Carolinas and Virginia. The couple of dozen trawlers in will have been to sea for a week or a month and may have been to Greenland or the White Sea. Their crews are lean and hardy. You get the decided impression that these men will always be able to snatch their precarious living from the dangerous oceans.

Tonight there is an overcast sky with occasional snow flurries in violent gusts of wind. Girdleness Lighthouse, which normally sends its 200,000 candle power beams more than twenty-five miles out to sea, can make itself known only by the doleful sound of its powerful foghorn, bellowing forth ten seconds out of each minute. Above the storm's roar you can occasionally hear the waves lashing against the rocks along the shore. The North Sea is acting up again and something tells me that I'm going to postpone my fishing trip until more seasonable weather comes along.

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