

Pacific Islands Fishing Boats and Gear

Photographs and text by V. T. Hinds*

The attendance of a large number of participants to discuss a comprehensive agenda concerning 'Fishing Boats and Fishing Gear Suitable for Pacific Island Fishermen' gave rise to lively and absorbing discussions at the Fourth Technical Meeting on Fisheries convened at SPC Headquarters, Nouméa, in October 1970. The first such meeting was held in 1952.

CONTRIBUTIONS on techniques in ferro-cement boat construction were made by Mr A. Sannergren, a shipbuilding expert of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Mr M. Sutherland of Ferro-Cement Ltd., New Zealand, and Mr J. Fyson, Fishing Boat Consultant to the South Pacific Islands Fisheries Development Agency.

The importance of suitable basic materials of premier quality correctly applied was stressed, and the disappointments experienced in the early days of ferro-cement boat construction because of bad design were discussed. Recent trends in the introduction of improved wire mesh and the application of epoxy resin paints to vulnerable areas have made considerable improvements in this technique, but low-impact resistance remains a consideration in the design of ferro-cement fishing vessels.

Other fishing craft which may be found suitable for the differing requirements of island territories came in for extensive comment from the various fisheries officers. These craft ranged from mechanized, plywood fishing canoes, through Florida fishing skiffs and motor dories to high-powered, fast fishing launches used in French Polynesia. Fisheries officers stressed the need for practical training courses for island fishermen in the construction and upkeep of wooden fishing boats, and the daily maintenance and repair of both marine-diesel motors and outboard engines.

Niue Island was considered to have many handicaps in fisheries development due to the lack of reefs and lagoons and the very limited facilities even for small fishing craft. Traditional canoes are carried up from the ocean

to be stored in caves cut into the coral limestone cliffs.

This fish-hungry island lies in the track of migratory pelagic fishes of prime quality, fished offshore by South-East Asian vessels, yet Niue imports eight to ten times the amounts of fish landed by local canoes, mainly in the form of Japanese canned mackerel. Mr Frank Lui, representing this small island, emphasized the need for better fishing boat landing sites and the introduction of a more versatile small fishing boat, possibly the mechanized dory.

The organization and support of village Fishermen's Associations in Fiji and Western Samoa was fully described by Mr A. Banner (US Peace Corps) and Mr W. Travis (Western Samoa). Mainly based on subsistence fisheries the cash return for fishing effort is relatively small, but the value to the community in terms of increased protein and regular employment, and the ready organization of subsistence fishermen to prepare them for a gradual up-grading to more efficient effort and eventual prosperity, greatly outweigh the initial supporting costs.

Mr W. Ellacott of French Polynesia gave an absorbing account of the history and development of the Tahitian method of catching bonito with the mother-of-pearl shell lure, explaining in considerable detail to a most attentive audience, not only the special skill required, but also the evolution of the Tahitian bonitier fishing launch. Fisheries officers were most interested in the introduction of this method, with local modifications in craft, to their

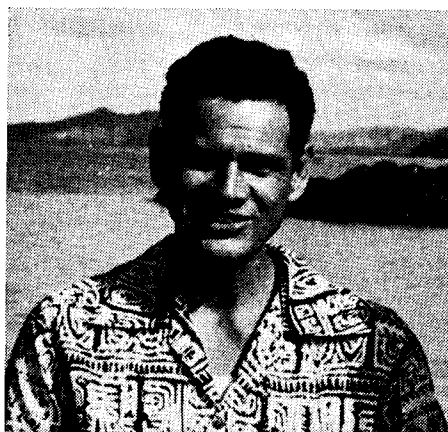


Chairman of the Fourth Technical Meeting on Fisheries, Mr Val Hinds, SPC Fisheries Officer, is flanked by Mr Allan Harris, SPC Programme Director (Economic). Mr Hinds, who is now in his fourth year with the Commission, was appointed Co-Director of the South Pacific Islands Fisheries Development Agency in July 1970, consulting with the Director, Mr Alan Tubb, on a number of fisheries development projects conjointly sponsored by SPC/UNDP and FAO throughout the 18 States and territories in the South Pacific region.

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Mr James Hughson, Fisheries Officer, Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, has had experience of tropical fisheries development with overseas governments and commercial fishing companies in recent years, and following his recent surveys of tuna resources in the GEIC he considers that local Colony fishermen have a bright and profitable future ahead of them.

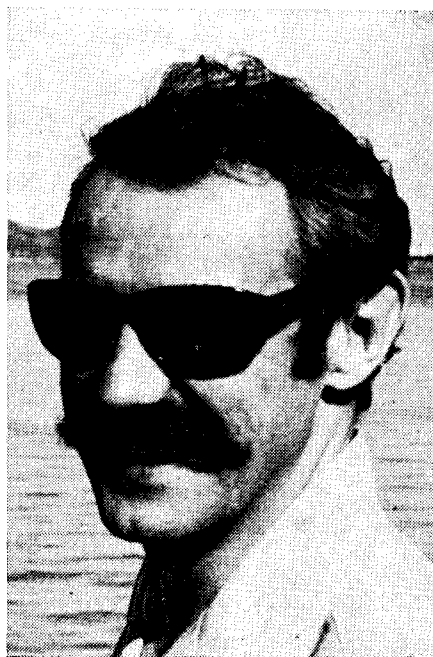


M. Warren Ellacott, of Papeete, representing French Polynesia, directs a boat-building yard and manages commercial tuna fishing boats operating in Tahitian waters. His contribution to the Technical Meeting on Fisheries on methods used by Tahitian fishermen to catch bonito with mother-of-pearl shell lures was received with appreciative attention.

own areas, and emphasized the importance of spreading more widely the fishing skills already in the Pacific region.

An interchange of information on the Crown-of-Thorns starfish, the history of its occurrence in several island groups, and methods of counter-attack through local eradication programmes was another highlight in the discussions.

The meeting generally was concerned over the implications of the growing foreign fishing interests in the waters of Pacific island territories, and made recommendations to be used as guide-lines for future negotiations with foreign fishing companies. It em-



Fishing boat consultant, John Fyson, is now attached to the South Pacific Islands Fisheries Development Agency, Noumea. Mr Fyson has worked in Africa, South-East Asia, and the Caribbean with FAO.

phasized the need to protect inshore fish stocks by establishing fishing zones extending beyond the outer limits of present territorial waters, and the need to establish an inter-territorial reporting procedure on the movements and encroachments of foreign vessels into defined limits.

Amongst the participants was M. M. Legend of *ORSTOM* who attended



M. Jean-Jacques Eude, Chef du Service de l'Inscription Maritime et de la Marine Marchande, led the New Caledonian participants during the Technical Meeting on Fisheries. M. Eude is responsible for the encouragement of local fisheries development; and with the recent arrival of a new fisheries patrol vessel he will be able to ensure that regulations concerning the conservation and proper management of reef and lagoon resources in New Caledonia are observed.

Mr Alby Adams, Senior Fisheries Officer from Suva, has been largely responsible for the establishment of Village Fishermen's Associations and improved fish marketing facilities for the outlying fishing communities in Fiji. He has also designed a comprehensive development plan which will make Fiji's fishing industry a major contributor to that nation's economy in the next few years.



the first meeting in 1952, and the most recently appointed Fisheries Officer, Dr B. White from the Cook Islands. The United States Peace Corps was represented for the first time by Mr A. Banner, and the National Centre for Oceanic Exploration (CNEXO) was represented by M. J. Perot who described plans for lagoon management in French Polynesia. Professor F. Doumenge, well-known for his scientific and social studies in the South Pacific, held the meeting enthralled with his exciting and inspiring accounts of recent trends in the special fields of aquaculture—farming the lagoons and the edge of the ocean.

Secretary-General of the South Pacific Commission, Afioga Afoafou-vale Misimoa, summed up the main objectives of the meeting in his opening address to participants.

The application of new techniques and materials in the fields of boat building and in the improvement of fishing gear is having an increasingly beneficial impact on our island fisheries. Individual islands have, however, differing requirements depending on available manpower, financial resources, fish stocks, and suitable facilities. There would appear to be no simple overall standard answer that can be projected on the varying backgrounds to be



Author of a number of publications on fisheries in the Pacific, Professor Francois Doumenge, Professor of Geography, University of Montpellier, France, represented French Polynesia and the Condominium of the New Hebrides at the Technical Meeting on Fisheries, and gave several talks on current work being carried out overseas in the specialized fields of shrimp and prawn cultivation, the management of spiny lobsters, oyster cultivation, and also the early stages of farming turtles.

Mr William Travis, Fisheries Officer, Western Samoa, the driving force behind an energetic programme to upgrade subsistence fisheries through the revival and improvement of traditional fishing craft and the introduction of improved fishing gear and fish marketing through Village Fisheries Associations. Mr Travis has directed the commercial aspects of the marine turtle industry in East Africa, boat building in Greece, and shark fishing and shell diving in the Seychelles Islands.



Dr Stanley Swerdloff, Supervisor of the Department of Marine Resources, Pago Pago, recently visited Tahiti to study the local bonito fishing industry. He sees a future for this method in his home waters where surveys have indicated a good supply of skipjack tuna. Dr Swerdloff is also keen to see ferro-cement fishing boats built for American Samoa, and feels that marine aquaculture has an important part to play in local fisheries development.

encountered in this vast region. Fisheries Officers with an intimate knowledge of the requirements of their own territories can, through an exchange of information, and open and frank discussion, in co-operation with the consultants and observers now with us, specify priorities, and avoid expensive duplication of effort, and this is in itself the valuable essence of this type of meeting.

The Report of the Fourth Technical Meeting on Fisheries, Nouméa, New Caledonia, was published by the South Pacific Commission in November 1970. □



A number of participants at the Technical Meeting on Fisheries visited the Marine Mechanics Course for French-speaking trainees on Nouville Island, New Caledonia, to inspect the workshops and listen to a talk on the training curriculum by Director M. J. Guillou. The Course is jointly sponsored by SPC/UNDP and ILO. A similar course for English-speaking trainees is being held in Honiara, BSIP.