

Chapter Five

EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY



TOPIC 5.1

The Great War

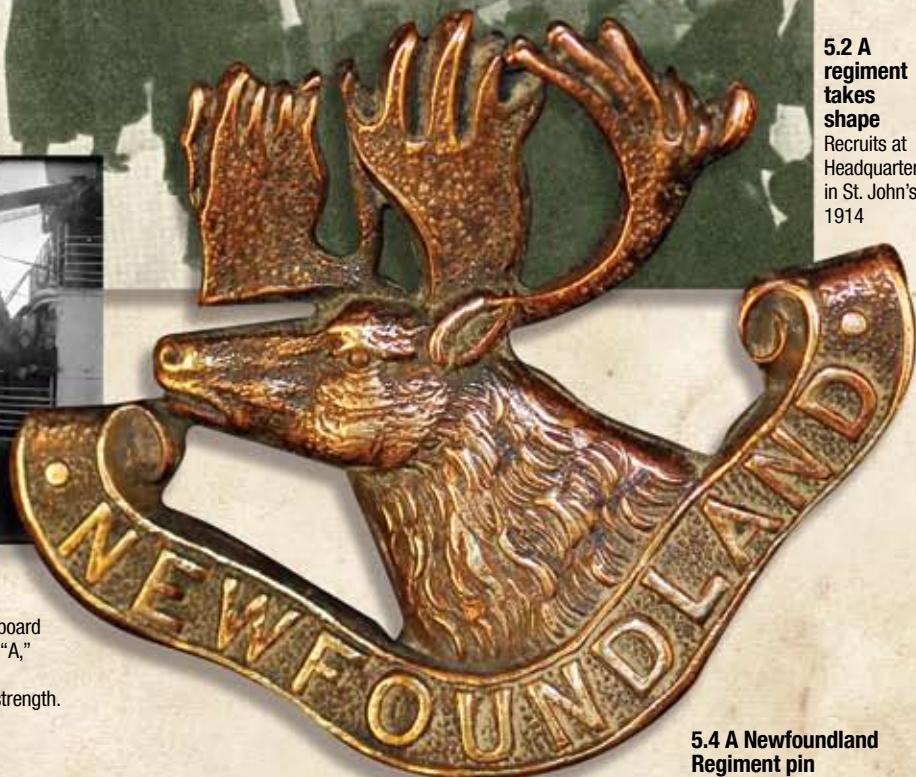
What are some of the costs of war?

Under what circumstances would you agree to go to war?

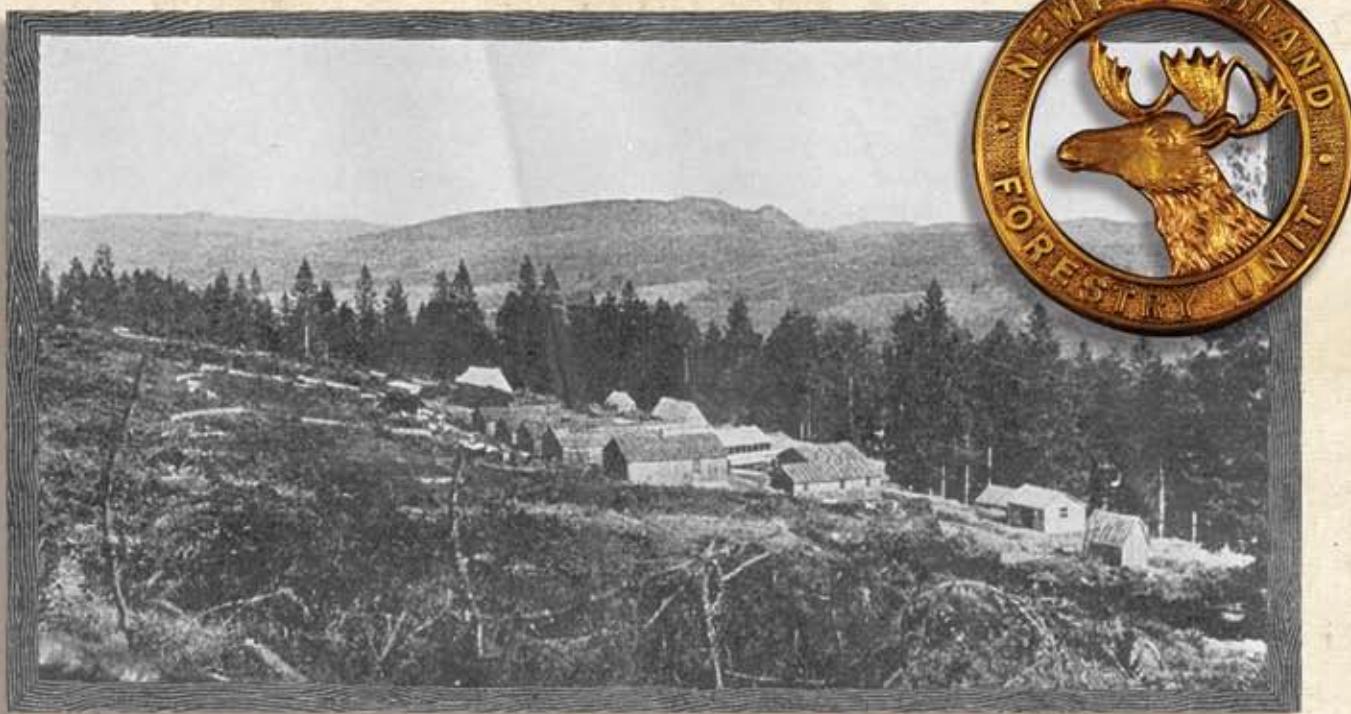
5.1



5.3 "D" Company departs
Men of the Newfoundland Regiment leave St. John's onboard the SS *Stephano*, March 20, 1915. "D" Company joined "A," "B," and "C" Companies guarding Edinburgh Castle on March 30, 1915, bringing the regiment to full battalion strength.



5.4 A Newfoundland Regiment pin



5.5 The Forestry Corps

Approximately 500 men enlisted in the Newfoundland Forestry Corps and worked at logging camps in Scotland during 1917 and 1918. Forestry Corps pin shown above.

Dealing with the War

When Great Britain declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914, the entire British Empire was brought into the conflict. This included Newfoundland. For Newfoundland, therefore, the decision was not whether to enter the war, but how, and to what degree its people would become involved.

The government of Edward Morris quickly decided to raise and equip a regiment for service in Europe. It established the Newfoundland Patriotic Association (NPA) to direct recruiting efforts and to manage the war effort in general. The NPA was a non-partisan **extra-parliamentary** body, chaired by Governor Sir Walter Davidson. It was a unique response to the imperial war effort. Incredibly, within two months of its formation, the NPA had the **First Five Hundred** (actually 537 soldiers), also known as the Blue Puttees,* recruited, partially trained, and ready to head overseas. On

October 3, 1914, the soldiers marched from their training camp to board the SS *Florizel*, a steamer converted into a troopship, which would take them overseas.

Under the NPA's direction, volunteers continued to be recruited, trained, equipped, and shipped to Europe until a Department of Militia was formed by the National Government in July 1917. In addition to the many men who served in the **Newfoundland Regiment**, significant numbers enlisted in the Royal Naval Reserve and in Canadian and other armed forces. Others joined the unarmed forces, which included the Merchant Marines and the Forestry Corps.** About 175 women also served overseas as **Volunteer Aid Detachment Nurses**. Known as VADs, these women worked in European military hospitals as nurses, ambulance drivers, cooks, clerks, and maids.



5.6 Blue Puttees at Pleasantville, St. John's, September 1914

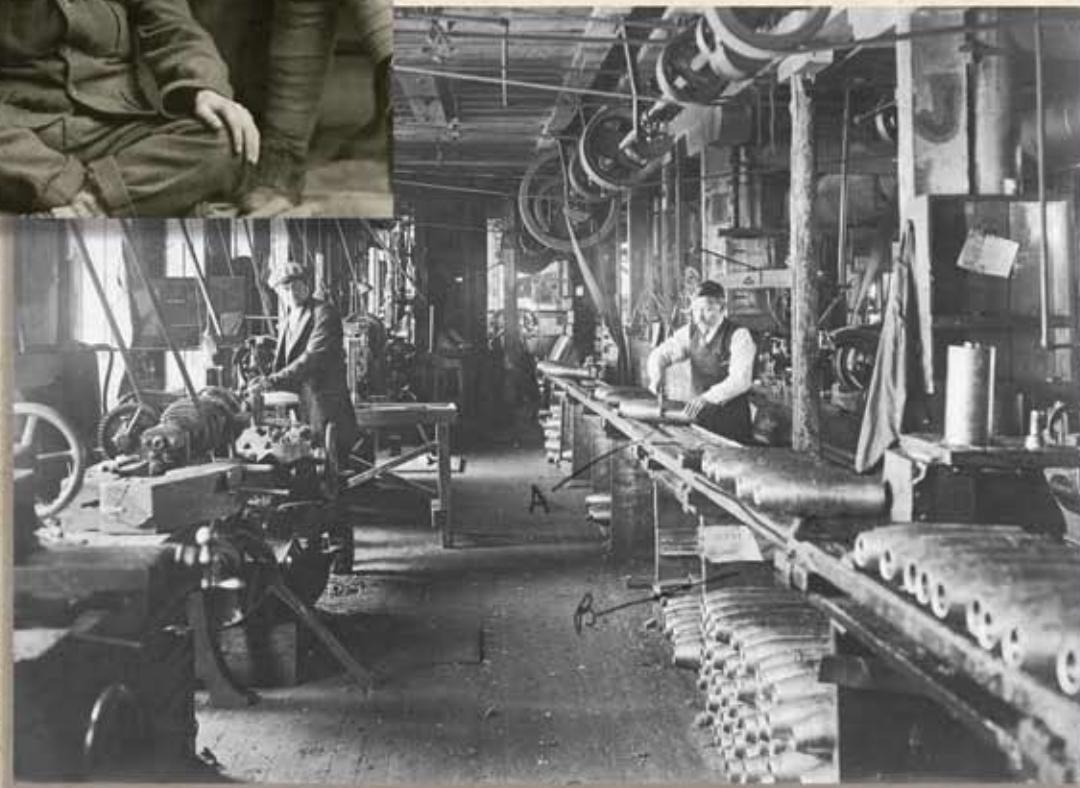
*A puttee is the covering for the lower part of the leg. At the outbreak of the First World War, the Newfoundland Regiment lacked regulation khaki broadcloth.

**The first members of the Forestry Corps were shipped to Scotland in 1917. Loggers worked long hours to satisfy Britain's wartime demand for lumber.



5.7 John Shiwak

At least 15 men of Inuit and Metis descent joined the Newfoundland Regiment. Many used their skills in sealing, hunting, and trapping to become expert snipers and scouts. Some were promoted for their bravery and others were decorated by the United Kingdom and Canada. John Shiwak, an Inuk hunter and trapper from Rigolet, distinguished himself as an expert sniper and scout during the war. He was promoted to lance-corporal on April 16, 1917, but died seven months later during the Battle of Cambrai in northern France.



5.8 Manufacturing shells in Newfoundland

The Newfoundland Shell Company opened at St. John's in 1915 to manufacture munitions. It employed over 100 workers in two-and-a-half years.

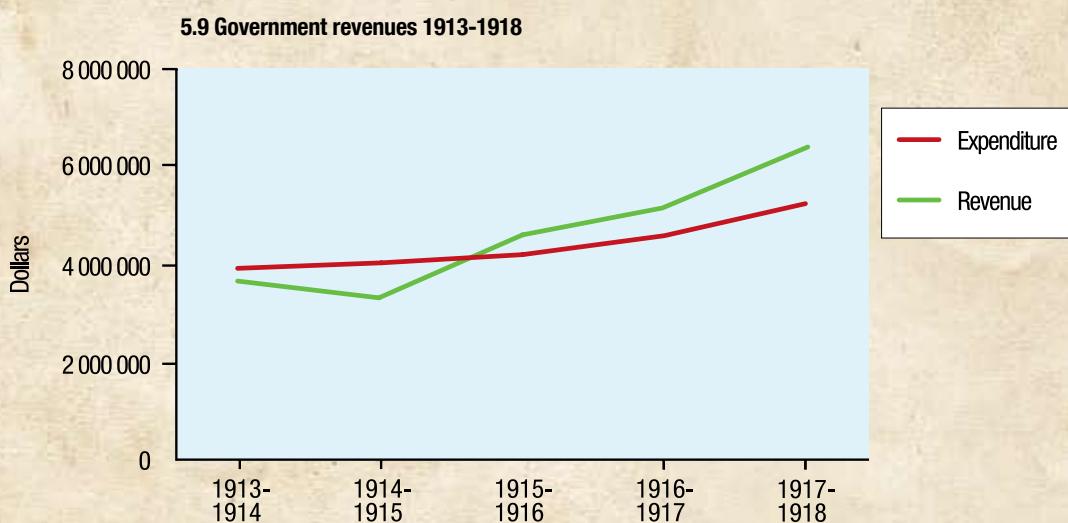
Newfoundland experienced rapid social, political, and economic changes. Young men from all over the island and Labrador came to St. John's to train and then to leave for battle overseas. Political parties united in support of the war effort, and the local economy boomed.

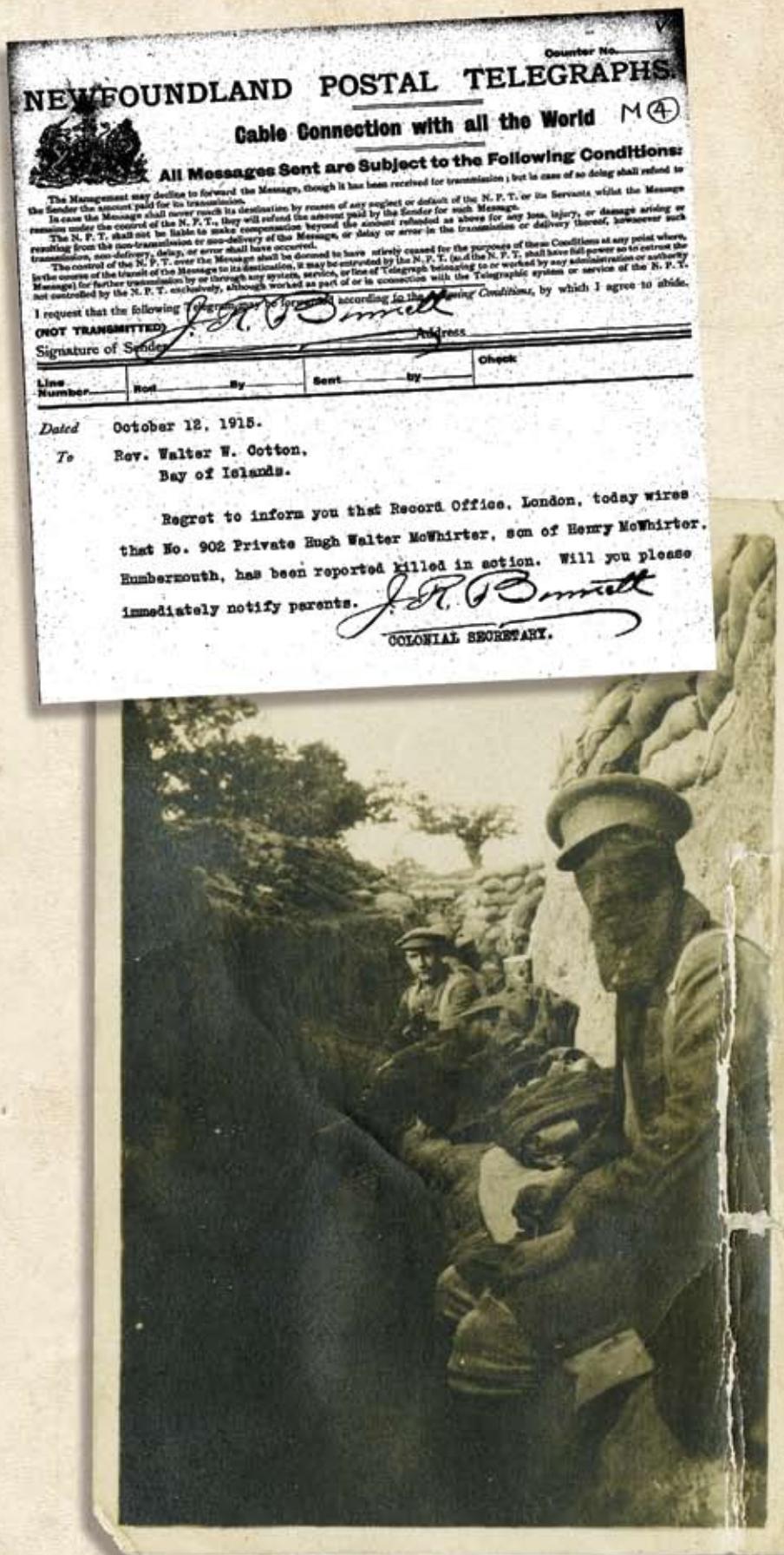
As Europe's demand for fish rose and some countries temporarily withdrew from the cod fishery, fish from Newfoundland began to dominate the marketplace. Forest and mining industries also benefited from wartime demand for lumber and iron ore. Although wartime inflation increased the cost of some imports, such as coal

and flour, rising wages helped to offset these expenses. For the year ending June 1918, the colony's revenue was \$6.5 million. This left the government with a surplus of over \$1.1 million – at that time, the largest surplus in Newfoundland's history.

However, with the signing of an **armistice** on November 11, 1918, hostilities ended and Newfoundland faced postwar problems. Slowly,* those who served began to return home and face the task of re-adjusting to civilian life. The wartime economic boom came to an end, leading to many domestic problems.

*The Royal Newfoundland Regiment maintained an active role with the British Army after the armistice. The men continued across Belgium into Germany, where they remained as part of the occupation force until February 1919.





5.10 Telegraph

(top) Most soldiers' files contain at least a few postal telegraphs, usually telegraphs sent to the next of kin indicating a soldier's illness, wound, or death. When a telegram was sent informing of a death, it was supposed to be preceded by a telegram to the family's local clergyman (or in his absence the local school teacher). The telegram to the next of kin typically contained a note to the telegraph operator that it was not to be delivered before the one advising the clergyman.

5.11 A brief stay in Turkey

(bottom) Men of the Newfoundland Regiment's "B" Company rest in a front line trench at Suvla Bay, Turkey in late 1915. During two major Allied withdrawals from the Gallipoli Peninsula, the rearguard of the Newfoundland Regiment was among the very last to leave.

OUR MEN AT THE FRONT

Shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, members of the Newfoundland Regiment left St. John's to train in Scotland and England. From there they were deployed to Gallipoli, Turkey, where on September 22, 1915, Private Hugh Walter McWhirter became the first member of the Newfoundland Regiment to lose his life in conflict. Before war's end, another 1304 Regiment members are known to have died in service. From Gallipoli, the Regiment went to Egypt and then the Western Front in Europe.

For many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Beaumont-Hamel is the battle of the First World War that stands out. The Newfoundland Regiment's advance at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916 was part of the opening day of the Battle of the Somme. Advancing on heavily fortified German lines, 19 240 soldiers in the British Army were killed within hours. Of these, 233 men were from the Newfoundland Regiment. Another 386 soldiers from the Regiment were wounded, and 91 were reported missing (and later assumed dead). Only 110 men from the Regiment remained unscathed after the battle.

The Regiment's sacrifice at Beaumont-Hamel was noted by Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces, Sir Douglas Haig. He said: "Newfoundland may well feel proud of her sons. The heroism and devotion to duty they displayed on 1st July has never been surpassed." However, Beaumont-Hamel is not the only place where Newfoundlanders and Labradorians lost their lives. The following table indicates selected battles on the Western Front in which the Newfoundland Regiment participated.

5.12 Casualties of selected battles

Battle	Date	Casualties
Somme Offensive - Beaumont-Hamel	July 1916	324 killed, 386 wounded
Somme Offensive - Gueudecourt	October 1916	120 killed, 119 wounded
Battle of Arras - Monchy-le-Preux	April 1917	166 killed, 141 wounded
Battle of Cambrai	November 1917	110 killed, 352 wounded



5.14

Service vs. Fatal Casualties of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in the First World War

Branch of Service	Number Who Served Overseas	Fatal Casualties
Royal Newfoundland Regiment	5391	1305
Royal Naval Reserve	2053	179
Newfoundland Forestry Corps	500	3
Merchant Marines	Estimated 500	155
Canadian and Other Forces	3200	Unknown
Total	Estimated 11 644	1642 known

5.13 A nation remembers

The National War Memorial at St. John's was unveiled on July 1, 1924.

Social Effects of the War

The First World War brought rapid and far-reaching social changes to Newfoundland and Labrador. Nearly 12 000 men left their homes to fight or to serve in other ways overseas. This was more than one-fifth of the colony's population and about 35 per cent of men aged 19 to 35. Many were away for years; some men returned physically injured or shell-shocked, while others had been killed and did not return at all.

The loss of so many young people created difficulties for those left behind. For the families of men who did volunteer, there was the tremendous emotional stress of separation, as well as numerous practical concerns. With the absence of their male relatives, women, children, and the elderly sometimes had to take on additional work, such as chopping firewood or digging vegetable gardens.

In addition, wartime fatalities left some children fatherless and deprived some elderly parents of the support they normally would have received from adult sons.

Many of the soldiers who did return home from war faced difficulties re-adjusting to civilian life. Some returned to fishing, logging, and other jobs, but many were unable to find work. This was particularly a problem for young men who enlisted when they were still in school or for soldiers who returned home with injuries. To help ease the transition from military to civilian life, the government created the Civil Re-Establishment Committee in June 1918. The committee had three goals: (i) to help restore injured men to the best possible state of health; (ii) to provide men with vocational training if needed; and (iii) to place them in suitable jobs.

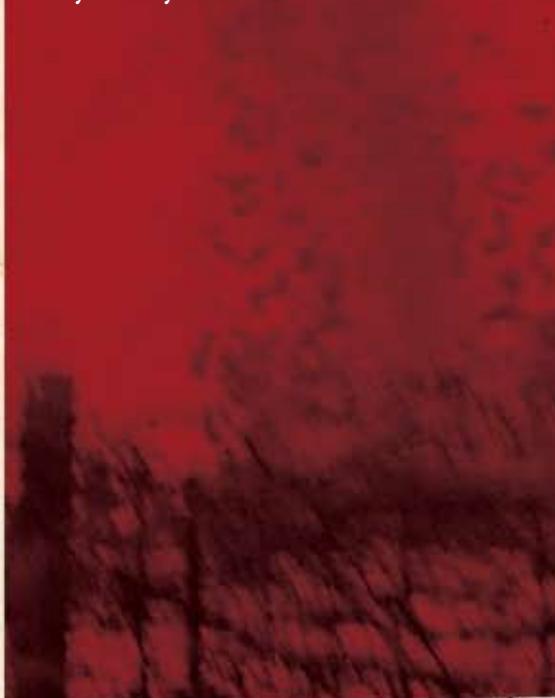


INVISIBLE WOUNDS

Even when physical injuries healed, many veterans had to deal with shell shock and other psychological problems. Some recovered in a relatively short period of time, but others felt the effects for years. Many veterans were reluctant to talk about their experiences and may not have received the proper medical help. Military historian Richard Gabriel has said: "Psychiatric breakdown remains one of the most costly items of war when expressed in human terms. In fact, in the First World War there was a greater probability of becoming a psychiatric casualty than of being killed by enemy fire."

5.15 Missing in action

Hundreds of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who took part in the First World War have no known grave (591 members of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, 114 Royal Naval Reservists, and 115 Merchant Mariners). On July 1, 2009, at Bowring Park in St. John's, three plaques were unveiled bearing their names. The plaques are exact replicas of those at Newfoundland Memorial Park Beaumont-Hamel, France.



<p>(2) The O.C. Special Hospital will be responsible that any points which appear to require investigation are brought to the notice of the Army Headquarters before this form is finally disposed of.</p> <p>(3) "Discharged to duty on (date) or Transferred to Base by No. Ambulance Train on (date)."</p>	<p>III. To D.A.G., 3RD ECHelon, G.H.Q. (8). Shell Shock (W)</p> <p>The above case has been classified.</p> <p>Disposal (9) <u>23. 30. 26. 9. 14.</u></p> <hr/> <p><u>W. Johnson</u> <u>Capt. R. C. M.</u> Date <u>25. 8. 17</u> for O.C. No. <u>62</u> <u>C. S.</u> (Special Hospital). <u>20. 9. 14</u></p>
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5.16 An excerpt from a medical report of a soldier suffering from shell shock

The report also noted: "... when advancing [soldier] was buried by shell + again when object was reached logs of wood + some clay falling on him almost took breath away. Pain in head + chest, very shaky + nervous."

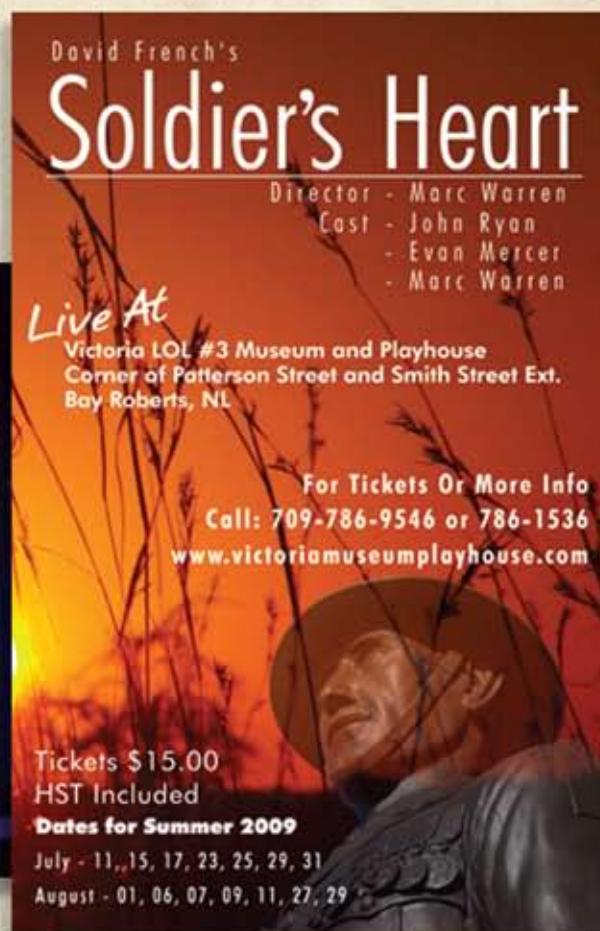


Excerpts from *Soldier's Heart* by David French (2002)

Set in Bay Roberts in 1924, *Soldier's Heart* tells the story of a father, Esau Mercer, trying to readjust to civilian life and reconnect with his son years after returning from the Great War. As Esau's son, Jacob, tries to reach out to his father, he learns his father is haunted by a hidden secret from his war days.



5.17 A performance of *Soldier's Heart*
Victoria Loyal Orange Lodge #3 Museum and Playhouse, Bay Roberts, 2009



5.18 A poster advertising a performance of *Soldier's Heart*

“It’s a waste of time ... T’ings happen in war that can never be forgotten ... never be forgiven. T’ings that a man just has to live with. It’s his punishment.”

— Esau Mercer in *Soldier's Heart* by David French

5.19

JACOB: It's you who hardly speaks, not me!

ESAU: Watch your tongue, you! I'm still your father! Speak to me in that tone of voice and I'll—

(Jim gets up from the table. He climbs his ladder at the back of the stage and begins to nail a board as if to make a new window frame. He is interrupted by an audio announcement.)

JACOB: (cutting in) What?

BERT: He's 16 years old, Esau. He wants to know what we did overseas. It's only natural ... Remember that British recruiting poster? 'Daddy, what did you do in the Great War?'

ESAU: What is it you tells him? How we sailed off in 1914 to save the world? You, me, and Will?

BERT: Some saviours.

ESAU: (recites bitterly)
'Why did we j'in the Army, b'ys?
Why did we j'in the Army?
Why did we come to France to fight?
We must have been bloody well barmy.'

BERT: The world was different then.

JACOB: Don't forget, Father. Most believed the War would be over by Christmas.

ESAU: Yes, Will wanted to go to Boston that fall with young Ruby Parsons. It was me who talked him out of it. 'It'll be a lark,' I said. 'We'll box the Kaiser's ears. Make ourselves a few dollars ...'

JACOB: Funny, we've talked more tonight than in all the past six years. We've even talked about the War. But we still haven't mentioned the most important part of all: July 1st. And why it is you avoids Bert.

ESAU: (to Bert) Is that what you told him? That I've been dodging you?

BERT: Indeed I didn't! I never said a word, did I, Jacob?

JACOB: I'm no fool, Father. And I ain't blind ... Bert would never tell, but I'm sure he knows more than he's letting on. That's why you shuns him, ain't it? Like that time at Sergeant Kelly's wedding. It's almost as if ...

ESAU: What?

JACOB: As if you can't bring yourself to look at him ... (A new thought) Or is it that you can't bear to have him look at you? Which?

ESAU: You tell me.

JACOB: It's all connected to Uncle Will, ain't it? Somet'ing happened out there in No Man's Land that neither you nor Bert will talk about.

BERT: Will died in battle, Jacob. He died and was buried. That's all that happened in No Man's Land.

JACOB: I don't believe you ... For years, Father you've kept it inside you, locked away like a dark secret. Whatever it is, it can't be so bad you can't speak about it.

ESAU: Can't it?

Experiencing The Arts

To give you an opportunity to practise your playwriting, your assignment is to select a topic/event/person that is covered in this chapter and then write a scene about that topic/event/person. To begin this process:

- Select a topic/event/person
- Decide what in particular it is about this subject that you want to explore in your scene. You may

need to do some additional research to help you with this.

- Decide what characters will be in the scene. For each character, write a brief character bio that explains his or her background and how it affects his or her motivation in the scene you are about to create.

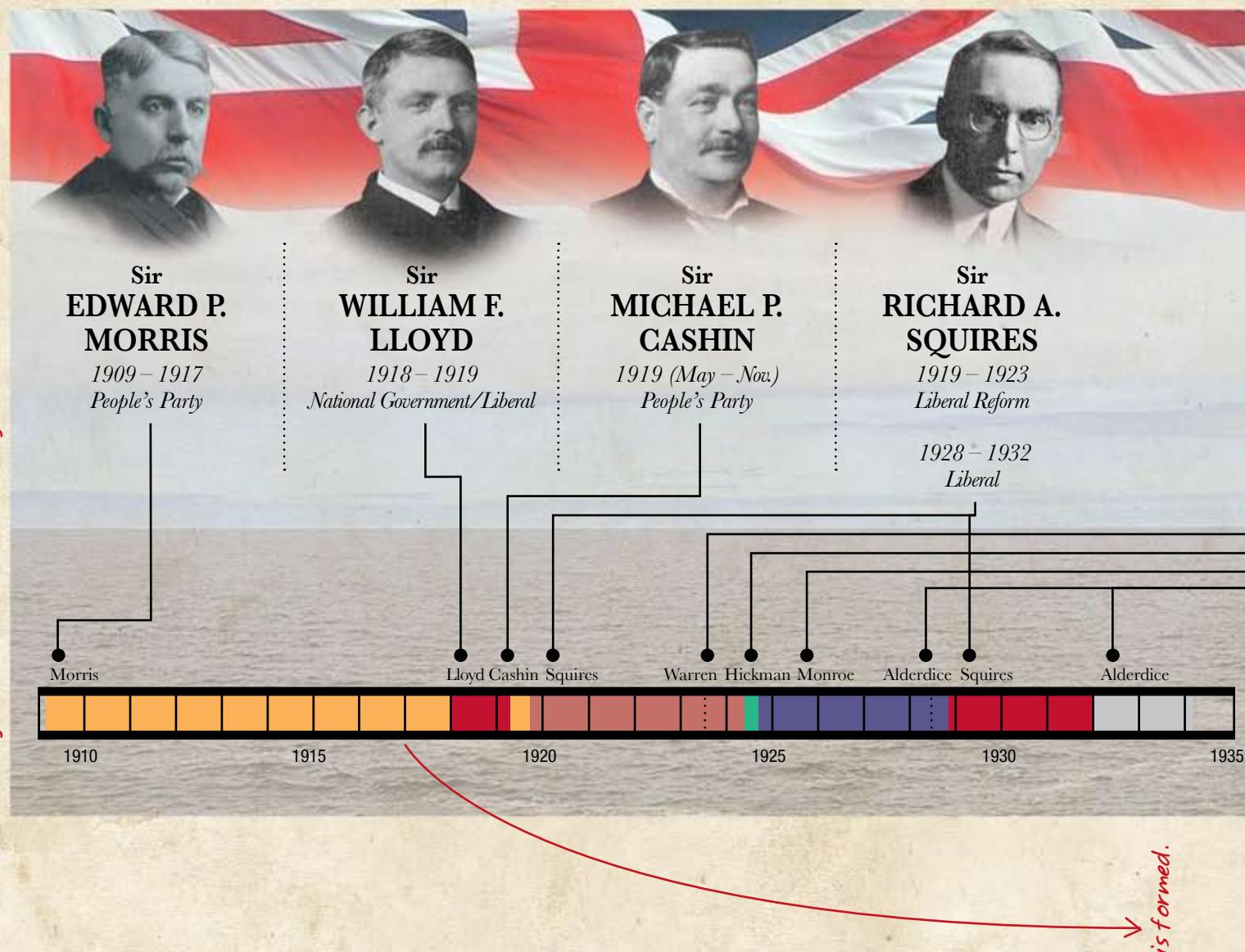
**After much debate, the National Government brought in conscription by the Military Service Act of May 1918 to maintain the strength of the Newfoundland Regiment. However, none of the conscripts reached the front before the war ended.*

Political Effects of the War

The war also left its mark on politics in Newfoundland and Labrador. Although all political parties supported the war efforts, party differences and other issues led Prime Minister Morris to form a National Government in July 1917 – in effect, a coalition of all parties. The new National Government faced several challenges, including the **conscription** issue* and Morris's abrupt resignation in December 1917 to accept a peerage. These developments, part of what historian Patrick O'Flaherty has called “a blurring of party distinctions,” contributed to the political instability that followed the war.

During the early 1920s, governments were typically short-lived and some lasted only a few weeks or months. Between 1919 and 1924, for example, six different prime ministers held office. Many had to deal with rising public discontent and various political scandals. Political instability encouraged public unrest, largely because it became impossible for politicians to work together to solve the colony's growing economic and financial problems.

5.20 Prime Ministers 1909-1934



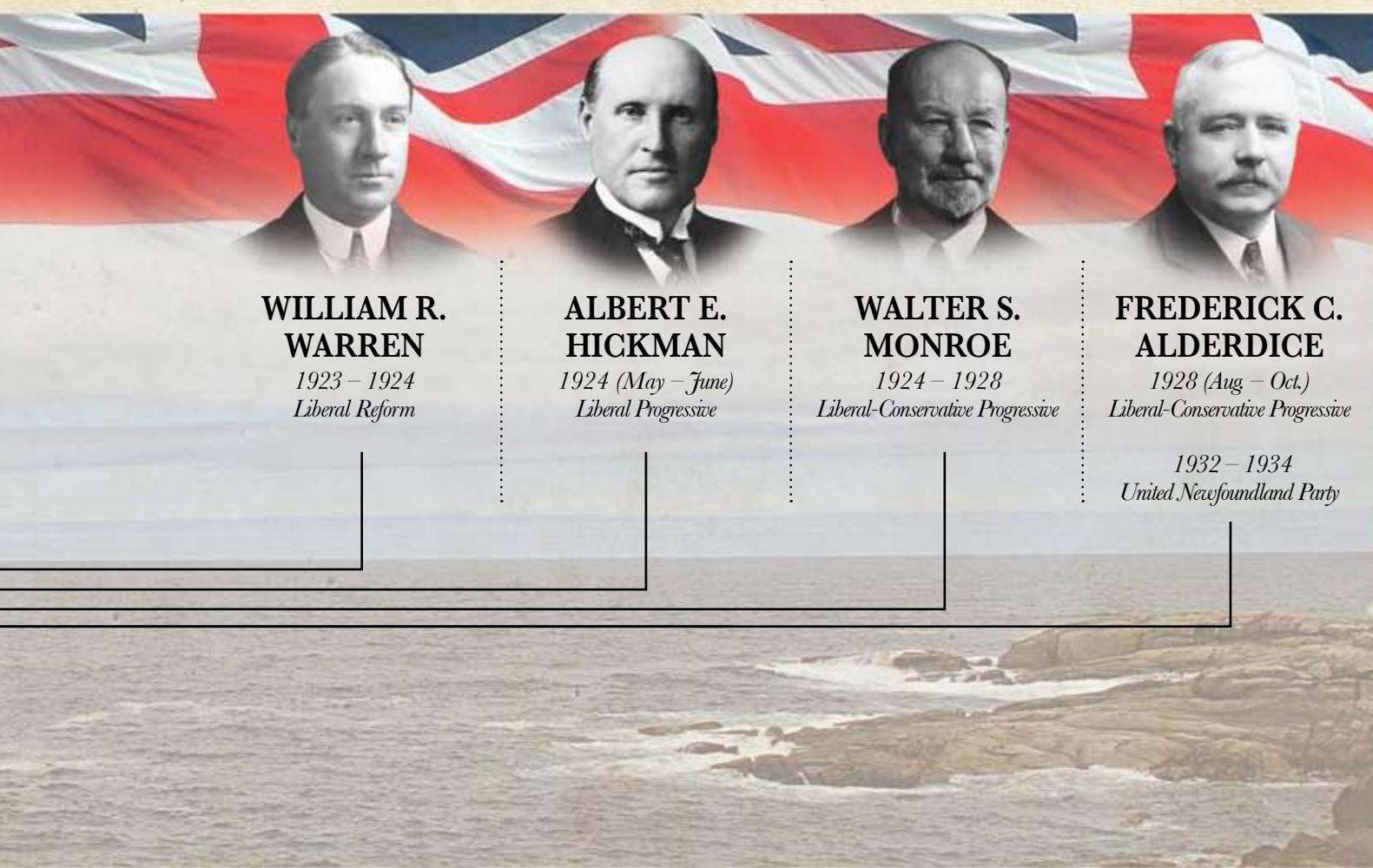
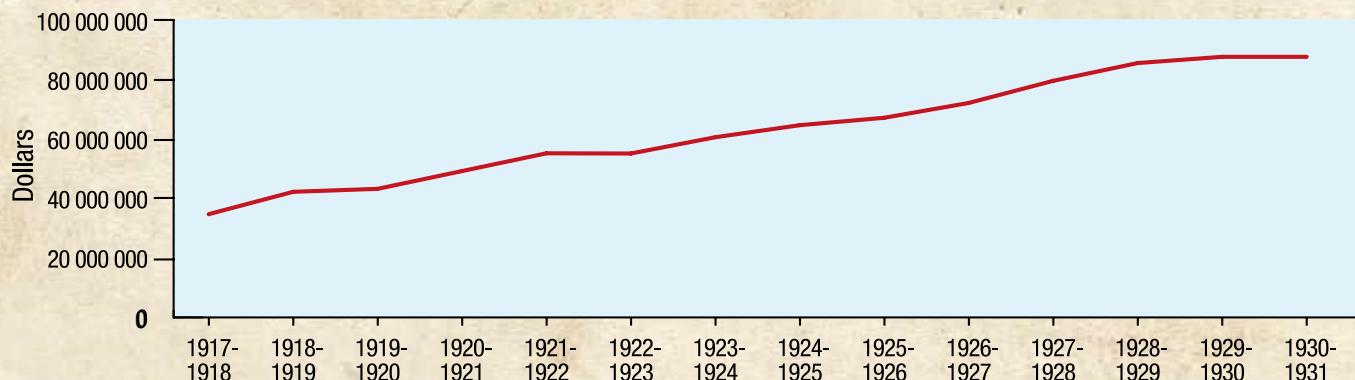
Economic Effects

This wartime boom was temporary, and the war in fact brought long-term problems. In 1914, the public debt was \$30.5 million. During the war, the government borrowed \$15 million, increasing the public debt to \$43 million. By 1918, almost a quarter of the colony's revenue was needed to pay the interest. In addition, government now faced the cost of paying pensions to returning servicemen, as well as other rehabilitation services.

By the early 1930s, the Newfoundland government was in serious financial difficulty, and this was compounded by the Great Depression. In 1933, almost \$100 million in debt, the colony turned to Great Britain for help. Thus began a series of events that would lead Newfoundland to the suspension of responsible government, the Commission of Government – and ultimately, Confederation.

National Government is formed.

5.21 Funded public debt



Questions:

1. More than 5000 men from Newfoundland and Labrador served overseas as part of the Newfoundland Regiment during the Great War. Identify the number of men from your community/area who enlisted. Assess the impact that this participation might have had on your community/area. (It may be helpful to examine some of the files of those soldiers as a source of qualitative data. Visit www.therooms.ca/regiment for details.)
2. Identify one event/aspect of the Great War. Create a graphic representation that illustrates the direct and indirect consequences of this event.
3. There are a number of reasons why the Great War was a significant event in our province's history. Identify the three most compelling arguments. Explain.

*The WCTU was part of a wider international temperance movement. Two of Newfoundland's WCTU members attended the World WCTU founding convention in Boston in 1891.



5.22 Newfoundland Suffragists, c. 1920s

Women in Newfoundland won the right to vote and run for public office in April 1925 after decades of lobbying government officials and promoting their cause on the public stage. This photograph was likely taken in Carbonear between 1921 and 1925.

5.23 The symbol of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)

WCTU members often wore white ribbons to symbolize purity and became known as the "White Ribboned Army."

TOPIC 5.2

Women's Suffrage

Suffragists maintained that work done by women in the home was beneficial to society. Is this work valued by society today?

Are women treated as equal partners in society today?

Introduction

The first campaign for women's **suffrage** in Newfoundland occurred in the 1890s and was organized, as in the United States and Canada, by the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).* The WCTU was a coalition of Protestant church women's groups that sought to rescue women and children from

domestic violence and other negative effects of alcohol. In order to achieve their goal, WCTU members wanted the right to vote in municipal elections so they could vote for the prohibition of alcohol.

On March 18, 1891, approximately 50 women from the

WCTU marched to the Colonial Building in St. John's to present island-wide petitions in support of allowing women to vote in municipal elections. Even though these petitions were restricted to the right to vote at the municipal level, they received widespread criticism. Two debates on suffrage took place in the House of

Assembly in 1892-93, but the suffrage measure was defeated each time. Thereafter, the WCTU's political position deteriorated, and many of its members turned their energies towards independent charitable work. The first phase of the women's suffrage movement in Newfoundland had come to an end.

"Give Us Prohibition!"

A Song by Jessie Ohman, first secretary of the Newfoundland WCTU

Why sadly mourns our native land?
Why weep our wives and mothers?
What dims the eye and shakes the hand,
And ruins husbands, brothers?
What clouds the clearest intellects,
And for its prey our best selects,
And gentle nature smothers?
'Tis alcohol turns men to brutes
And every holy plant uproots.

Go visit where the drunkards dwell,
You languid, selfish scoffers,
And know that wine has wrung the knell
To joys the homestead offers.
There gaunt starvation loves to hide,
There strife and hate and grief abide,
There empty hearts and coffers;
And children old in want and fear,
And broken-hearted wives are there.

5.24

"... we have no word of sympathy or encouragement for those ladies who would voluntarily unsex themselves, and, for sake of obtaining a little temporary notoriety, plunge into the troubled waters of party politics."

— Excerpt from *The Evening Telegram*, April 20, 1893

The Ladies' Reading Room, 1909-1914

The second phase of the suffrage movement began in response to the exclusion of women from lectures at a male club in St. John's. Women had been allowed to attend these lectures before 1909. But public controversy about suffrage had resurfaced in Newfoundland following reports of militant suffragette activities in England. Although local women were not associated with these activities, a backlash against suffrage emerged. Banned from lectures at the male club, a group of prominent St. John's women gathered at local suffragette Armine Gosling's home in December 1909 and began The Ladies' Reading Room and Current Events Club.

Members of the Ladies' Reading Room tended to be socially prominent women who were well-travelled,

well-read, and aware of suffrage activities throughout the world. A woman was allowed to join the Reading Room if she was introduced by an existing member and paid a nominal fee of \$3 a year. This provided her access to a selection of British and American suffrage newspapers and magazines. In addition, members could attend the Current Events Club, which served the political interests of the suffragists involved with the Reading Room. As author Margot I. Duley explains, "The Club [marked] a crucial development in the revival of the suffrage movement for within its walls women of influence in St. John's were politicized and converted to the cause. The Club functioned virtually as a self-taught liberal arts college in which members gave papers, developed analytical skills, discussed issues, and gained confidence as public speakers."

ARMINE NUTTING GOSLING



5.25 Armine Nutting Gosling

was one of the leaders of the suffrage campaign in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Armine Nutting Gosling (1861-1942) led the Newfoundland suffrage campaign from 1909 to its successful conclusion in 1925. She was born into “genteel poverty” – that is, a well-educated family with a limited income – in Waterloo, Quebec. Her father was an alcoholic, who was often unable to work, so her mother provided for the family by working as a seamstress. This helped convince Armine from an early age that women’s work and contributions to society were undervalued.

In 1884, Armine became principal of the Church of England Girls’ School in St. John’s. While in Newfoundland, she met and married Gilbert Gosling (who later became Mayor of St. John’s). Author Margot I. Duley notes: “Gilbert was a man of advanced views who treated his wife as an intellectual equal, and together they read and discussed public events, in which they were both keenly interested.”

Armine’s views were also likely shaped by her international connections. Her sister, Adelaide, had become the first professor of nursing in the United States. While visiting her at Columbia University in New York, Armine was exposed to many of the progressive ideas* of the time. Ultimately, Armine’s suffrage beliefs included both maternal and equal rights traditions. On one hand, she emphasized the natural nurturing qualities that women would bring to politics. On the other, she followed the equal rights thinking of philosopher John Stuart Mill, who argued that the emancipation and education of women would have positive benefits for all of humanity.

*For instance, through her sister, Armine met Lavinia Dock, a leader in American nursing and in the women’s suffrage and labour movements.

THE LADIES’ READING ROOM.

WHILE St. John’s cannot be said to be very advanced in the matter of women’s clubs, it can boast at least one institution devoted solely to the mental refreshment of women, in the shape of a reading-room, containing a well-selected assortment of leading magazines and papers. In December, 1919, some



THE COMMITTEE SOLDIERS’ AND SAILORS’ CLUB.

Reading from left to right, top row—Mrs. MacDermott, Mrs. T. J. Edens, Miss E. Dickinson.
Lower row—Mrs. Paterson, Mrs. Chas. Ayre, and Mrs. Herder.

eight or ten ladies met at the residence of Mrs. Gosling, Le Marchant-rd., to discuss the feasibility of some such enterprise. As soon as the project became known, applications for admission came in thick and fast, so that in a few weeks its membership numbered 125. A large and airy room in Lyon’s Building, Water-street, was rented, and a prosperous career entered upon. Lady Horwood was elected President, Mrs. J. A. Clift Vice-president, and Mrs. Gosling Secretary-treasurer, and these ladies performed most of the spade work which such an undertaking involves. The machinery has always been of the simplest description. Any woman can join, on the introduction of a member and the payment of \$3.00 per annum. Saturday was chosen for club day, when papers, sometimes of a high literary merit, have been contributed by members and teas served. Lady Davidson, the Hon. President, sets the ball rolling by contributing the first paper, when the yearly season begins, in November.

“This reading-room certainly affords a refutation of the popular theory that women cannot work together in peace and harmony. It has been in existence seven years, and has been conducted without the least friction from its inception until the present time.”

ARMINE N. GOSLING.

5.26 An article on The Ladies Reading Room from the *Distaff*, 1916

“Distaff Feminism,” 1914-1919

The third phase of the suffrage movement in Newfoundland was defined by “distaff* feminism.” Generally speaking, there were two main arguments for women’s suffrage:

1. “Natural rights” – women deserve equal rights with men by the simple virtue of being human.
2. “Maternal rights” – women’s maternal qualities have a positive effect on public life and women deserve public recognition for their maternal contributions to society. (This is the main idea of distaff feminism).

While suffrage leaders were inspired by both philosophies, it was the maternal rights argument that seemed to resonate with most women and men in Newfoundland. All classes of women contributed to their homes and communities through traditional domestic activities – especially baking, serving, knitting, and sewing. Elite women in St. John’s used their maternal skills to

*A distaff is a tool used in spinning to hold the un-spun fibres. It also became an adjective to describe the female side of a family.

hold fundraising events for churches and public charities, while working and middle-class women used their maternal skills to supplement the family income. These “distaff” activities became crucial to Newfoundland’s contribution to the First World War.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, women’s war activities were spearheaded by the **Women’s Patriotic Association** (WPA). The WPA had branches across the island and in Battle Harbour, Labrador. These branches were usually formed around women’s church

groups. The work of the WPA was a public extension of women’s roles as mothers in the “private sphere.” Activities involved fundraising, knitting “comforts” (such as socks, mittens, scarves, and hats) for the Newfoundland Regiment, producing hospital and surgical supplies, visiting the relatives of volunteers and naval reservists, and nursing – as both graduate nurses and Volunteer Aid Detachment Nurses (VADs). Women’s participation in the war effort helped change public perception about women’s abilities and the economic value of their work.

5.27 Women’s war efforts helped prove the value of their contributions to society.

(right) The Cutting Committee of the St. John’s branch of the Women’s Patriotic Association at Government House. The primary task of this committee was to cut out garments and prepare them for workers to sew and complete. Note that a billiard table is being used as the cutting table.

(below) Armine Gosling (daughter of Mrs. Armine Nutting Gosling) was one of at least 38 women from Newfoundland and Labrador who served with the Volunteer Aid Detachment (VAD) during the First World War. Candidates for the VAD trained for three to six months in first aid and home nursing. They supplemented professional nursing services on the front lines and on the home front and learned to drive ambulances throughout Europe in order to fill the gaps between the field ambulances and the base hospitals.



Miss Armine Gosling with British Red Cross Motor Ambulance in France, presented by St. John's, Newfoundland.—Daughter of W. G. Gosling, Esq., Mayor of St. John's.

For example, by 1916, the WPA had raised over \$200 000 through their fundraising efforts.

The Newfoundland Women's Franchise League, 1920-1925

The fourth and final phase of the Newfoundland suffrage movement began after the First World War ended. Building on the public's appreciation of women's contributions during the war, Armine Nutting Gosling led a push for suffrage and launched the **Women's Franchise League** (WFL). The movement began with a publicity campaign in May 1920. The WFL sent articles and letters to daily papers, canvassed local homes, wrote letters to women in the outports, and even projected suffrage advertising slides at the movie theatres in St. John's.

This activity led up to their 1920 petition drive and its presentation to the Legislature:

Whereas we regard ourselves as partners in the responsible business of homekeeping which is so vital to the best interests of the Dominion; and Whereas many of us are workers helping to produce the wealth of the Dominion; and Whereas in other parts of the British Empire women enjoy all the rights of the franchise, and assume its responsibilities; and Whereas the women of Newfoundland rose to every call made upon them during the Great War, and showed energy and executive ability in the organization of relief and other work, and that many of them served overseas as Nurses, V.A.D.s and Ambulance Drivers; Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that your Honourable House will, during the present Session, pass a law by which there will be given to the Women of the Dominion the rights of the franchise on conditions similar to those commonly required of men.

— From the Legislative Council Proceedings, May 9, 1921

5.28 Excerpt from *The Daily News*, May 12, 1920

ST. JOHN'S, MAY 12, 1920.

WON BY SACRIFICE AND SERVICE.

It has come elsewhere; it is coming in Newfoundland; and the sooner it comes the better. One thing the war has conclusively proved, that the sphere of woman is far wider than it was in the bygone years. What militant suffragism could never have won, the quiet service and unparalleled devotion of the women of the Empire have accomplished. Seeking not their own the women of the Empire have found it; they have shown their ability and influence in a manner that not the most confirmed misogynist dare dispute. What womankind did in the war, on the field, in the base hospitals, in the nursing and convalescent homes; their gentle ministrations, splendid fearlessness in war-service; their readiness and adaptability of effort in all spheres of toil; the magnificent pluck and praiseworthy determination to keep the home fires, the office fires, and the factory fires burning brightly whilst their men were fighting their battles and the Empire's; their work on the land, and in the munitions factories; the ceaseless efforts to help the boys at the front, and to make the burdens of battle less grievous to be borne,—these and a thousand other modest triumphs have proved their fitness for the franchise

To take the Bill, after
having definitely pledged
themselves to do so.

The women interested
would infinitely prefer
that the Bill should be made
a Government measure
during the present session
of the House,
determined
to present
and if
does not
meeting

respect, the Women's Party
will see that it is presented
by a member of the
Opposition on Friday June 4th

To the Hon R. A. Squires P.C.
Prime Minister of Newfoundland.

Sir —

The promoters of the
Women's Suffrage movement

A. M. Morris
D. Macpherson
Sant Ayre
Mary Kennedy
Fannie McNeil
L. Pearce

Agnes M. Ayre
Helen M. Baird
Anne M. McNeil
Adelice E. Browning

St. John's
June 2nd 1920

5.29 June 2, 1920 letter to
Sir Richard Squires in the
handwriting of M. Macpherson
asking for government
support for enfranchisement
of women.

The letter reads: Sir - The promoters of the Woman's Suffrage movement beg to draw the attention of the Premier to the incomprehensible attitude of the Government towards the question of the enfranchisement of women, as evidenced in the failure of the two Government members to table the Bill after having pledged themselves to do so. The women interested would infinitely prefer that the Bill should be made a Government measure during the present session of the House; but they are determined that it shall be presented this year and if the Government does not see its way to meeting their views in this respect, the Women's Party will see that it is presented by a member of the opposition on Friday June 4th.

**Armine Gosling was active in the movement until she retired to Bermuda with her ailing husband in 1927. After her departure, the movement was spearheaded by Fanny McNeil.*

Although the WFL succeeded in collecting thousands of signatures from women across the island, the suffrage measure was defeated in the Legislature – at least in part due to the unsympathetic attitude of Premier Richard Squires, who opposed women’s suffrage. Squires’ opposition to suffrage likely reflected his own political situation – he was involved in several political scandals throughout the 1920s and suffrage leaders sought to “clean-up” the political arena. They also supported modifications to **prohibition**, which was unpopular in Catholic districts, and as the member for St. John’s West, Squires depended on the Catholic vote. Efforts of the WFL continued for the next five years under Armine Nutting Gosling’s* leadership with some financial support from the International Women’s Suffrage Alliance (IWSA).

Success came at last for the Newfoundland women’s suffrage movement in March 1925 with the support of a new government led by Walter S. Monroe. The suffrage bill passed unanimously through the Legislature, giving Newfoundland women the right to vote and to run for political office. Women on the island of Newfoundland participated in their first general election** on October 29, 1928, when 52 343 women cast ballots. This represented approximately 90 per cent of the women who were eligible to vote. In 1930, Lady Helena Squires, wife of Sir Richard Squires, became the first woman elected to political office in Newfoundland when she won the Liberal seat in Lewisporte.



5.30 Fannie McNeil with her family, c. 1910

Fannie McNeil was a leading member of the Newfoundland suffragist movement. In 1925, she became one of the country’s first women to run for political office, when she nearly won a seat on the St. John’s city council.

***Women in St. John’s actually received the right to vote at the municipal level in 1921, when Mayor Gilbert Gosling (husband of suffragist Armine Nutting Gosling) drafted a new city charter.*

Questions:

1. What were the four phases of the women’s suffrage movement in Newfoundland? What were the similarities and differences between these phases?
2. One of the purposes of enfranchisement was to help ensure that there was a better representation to address issues affecting women.
 - a. What percentage of current members of the House of Assembly (or the House of Commons) is female?
 - b. What issues significantly affect women in our province today? Conduct a survey of women in your community to help identify the most important issues.
3. The right to vote is restricted to those age 18 and older.
 - a. What arguments can be used to support this age limit?
 - b. What arguments can be used to support lowering the voting age?
 - c. Which argument is the most compelling?

(((DIMENSIONS OF THINKING)))

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

— The Empowerment of Women —

During the course of human history, societies have advanced various ideas about the roles of women and men. Gender significantly influences a person's "place" in society. Throughout much of the last thousand years, women in the western world were not afforded the same rights and freedoms that were available to most men. As with many aspects of culture, this idea was accepted by many (both men and women) as appropriate. In fact, for most there was no expectation that women should have the same rights as men.

However, as ideas around politics and individual liberty were more vigorously explored from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, many changes in our assumptions occurred. These changes included the notion of elected representative government and the right of individuals

to enjoy certain liberties, such as freedom of speech. Over time, these ideas came to challenge many **cultural norms**, including the belief that women were not to be afforded the same rights as men.



5.31 Women voters in Kuwait waiting to vote for the first time, June 2006

Women in Kuwait did not win the right to vote until 2005. As of 2010, there are still a few countries, such as Saudi Arabia, where women are not eligible to vote.

Today we view gender equality as the norm. However, this expectation is relatively new. In fact, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which is at the heart of many aspects of gender equality in Canada, only became law in 1982. Prior to that time, some forms of gender-based discrimination were not legally considered wrong. For example, in Newfoundland and Labrador in 1970:

- A divorced woman was not entitled to any assets acquired in the family home during her marriage.
- A female teacher at Memorial University lost her

“Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.”

— From the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*

permanent position when she got married.

- The minimum wage for a man was 25 cents per hour higher than for a woman.
- Women were not eligible to sit on juries.

Even in today’s world, all people do not enjoy the same freedoms – for instance, women in Saudi Arabia do not have the right to vote in elections. However, if we continue to discuss and debate issues related to culture and society, there is a feeling among some individuals that change will come about to ensure that we live in a just society.

Country	Year
New Zealand	1893
Australia	1902
Finland	1906
Norway	1913
Denmark	1915
Iceland	1915
Canada	1917
Russia	1917
Germany	1918
Ireland	1918
Sweden	1919
United States	1920
Newfoundland	1925
South Africa (white women)	1930
Brazil	1931
Portugal	1931
Spain	1931
France	1944
Japan	1945
Italy	1946
India	1947
Greece	1952
Switzerland	1971
Iraq	1980
South Africa (black women)	1994
Qatar	1997

5.32 Women’s suffrage victories in select countries, 1893-1997*

* These dates represent suffrage at the federal level. In many countries, women could vote in municipal elections long before they could in federal elections.

Questions: *Answers*

1. Today, if an individual is treated unfairly this action may be a violation of human rights under the *Canadian Charter of Human Rights*. What areas of the Charter protect people from discrimination?
2. Who are some of the pioneers in advocating for greater participation by women in the political life

of our province? What issues did they face? See: www.teachaboutwomen.ca

3. Although the rights of women are protected in various legislation, such as the Charter and the *Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Code*, what parts of our culture still pose problems for women?

The Great Depression

*Maintaining the national railway, which the government took control of in 1923, also added to the public debt.

What happens during an economic downturn such as a recession or depression?

What challenges would a family face if the wage earner(s) were laid off during a period of economic decline?

The Crisis Begins

Although Newfoundland and Labrador experienced a time of economic prosperity during the war, hard times followed. This was due largely to Newfoundland's increasing public debt and the wider “**Great Depression**” that began with the crash of the New York Stock Exchange in 1929. As in many parts of the world, the 1930s were a time of widespread poverty and suffering in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The total cost of the First World War for Newfoundland was \$35 million. Throughout the 1920s, the country's debt continued to rise* as the government ran annual deficits. Unable to meet its financial requirements without borrowing money, the government raised bank loans to finance developments and pay the interest on the debt. One of Newfoundland's creditors, a syndicate of Canadian banks, placed increasingly restrictive terms upon these loans – and even then had to be encouraged to make the loans by the Canadian prime minister. Newfoundland's debt increased until, by 1933, the government owed over \$93 million, and a major share of its revenue (62.3 per cent) was being used to make interest payments on the debt.

Compounding the situation was the breakdown in world trade caused by the Great Depression. This significantly damaged Newfoundland's export-based economy. Particularly detrimental was a slump in the international market for dried cod, which accounted for much of the country's income. Reduced exports meant less money for importing goods and, in turn, a decrease in government revenues which came largely from customs duties** charged on imported goods.

They Need Your Help

Will You Save Them from Suffering?



Give to a worthy cause

Would you save a destitute family from suffering? Would you help to lessen the worry and distress that face scores of families this winter? Will you be a Good Samaritan and do a little to help deserving humanity and ease the burden of care and suffering? Every little bit contributed to The Mayor's Civic Relief Fund to aid the deserving poor of this community will help. It will keep little children from shivering to bed . . . It will help mothers and families that provide for their needs.

Give to this worthy cause who will be benefited

NEWFOUNDLAND, OCTOBER 21, 1929—8

Financial Panic in New York

Market Hysteria Causes Sensational Fall

Tradition required. Throughout the whole day's trading on the New York Stock Exchange yesterday, the market went wild and a panic set in which exceeded the worst day in the history of the exchange. During the nearly fifteen million shares were traded in an unusual short time. It is recognized, and almost general, the record made this morning when over seven million shares were sold in one day. Leading stocks came tumbling down from the low levels to which they had fallen following the frantic selling of last Saturday and over thousands of small speculators have been wiped out. The market of a week ago was certainly never with dross or from fear to elbow room following a hearing, which caused panic among those who were bitten on by the skin of their teeth, and leading to considerable forced liquidation. While additional stocks will be dealt with in the market report of "Tomorrow's Telegram" as an indication of the sensational occurrences of the day, it may be pointed out that American and Canadian stocks dropped from an average of 119 to 50 which is down from a record high of 126 to 100 for the year. The market closed at 72 points. Canadian stocks, foreign papers were suspended during the closing hours of the day's trading in 1929. Advertisers of the financial press, it may be noted, did not

STARTLING DECIDES MARKET THE SPANISH TRIOLOGY

An indication of the startling low levels to which the leading stocks on the New York Exchange have fallen, the following table compiled yesterday is interesting. This table does not take account of the market losses to which most stocks fell on Thursday's trading, when the entire market was thrown into a fever fit, was more in the closing hours of the afternoon, when, as is commonly known, the stocks quoted. No attempt is made to

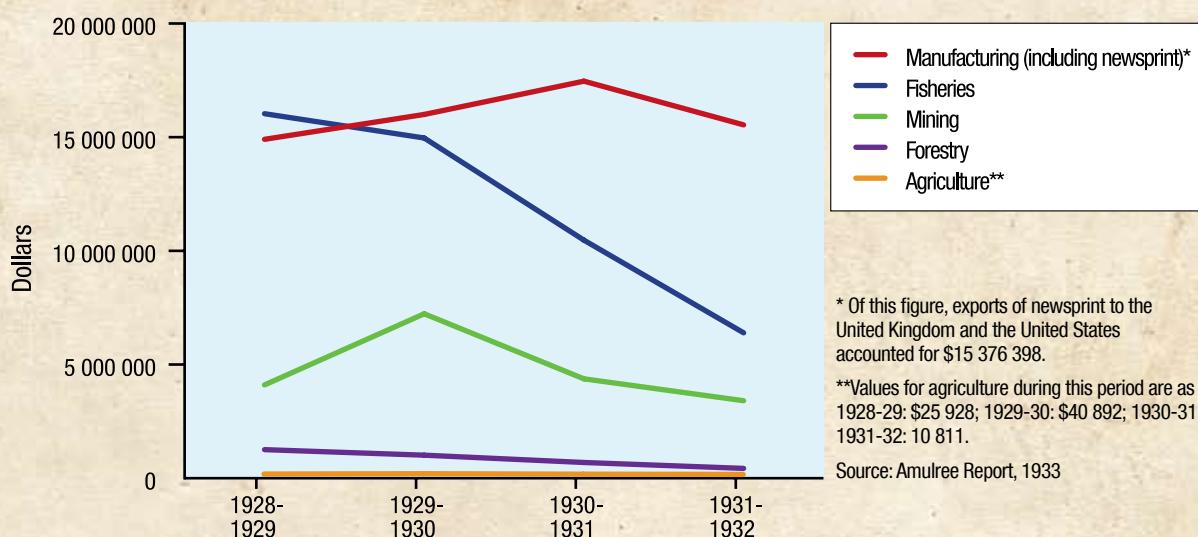
NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE

	Price
American Can.	112 1/2 144 5/8
Arm & Am. Power	786 7/8 714 9/16
Assaults	146 89 125 243
Bathsheba Steel	146 92 235 355
Bechtel	41 18 37 24
Bechtel	41 18 37 24

5.34 Excerpt from *The Evening Telegram*, Oct. 29, 1929

The Great Depression of the 1930s was a worldwide financial and social crisis. It began with the sudden crash of the New York Stock Exchange on “Black Tuesday,” Oct. 29, 1929. The economy of the United States accounted for nearly half of the world's industrial output and, in the aftermath of the stock crash, industries downsized and cut spending, individuals lost their jobs, and the prices of commodities plummeted. The resulting economic decline in the United States, Britain, and other industrialized countries had a direct impact on the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador and set the stage for a decade of depression, unemployment, and widespread poverty.

5.35 Exports by sector, 1928-1932

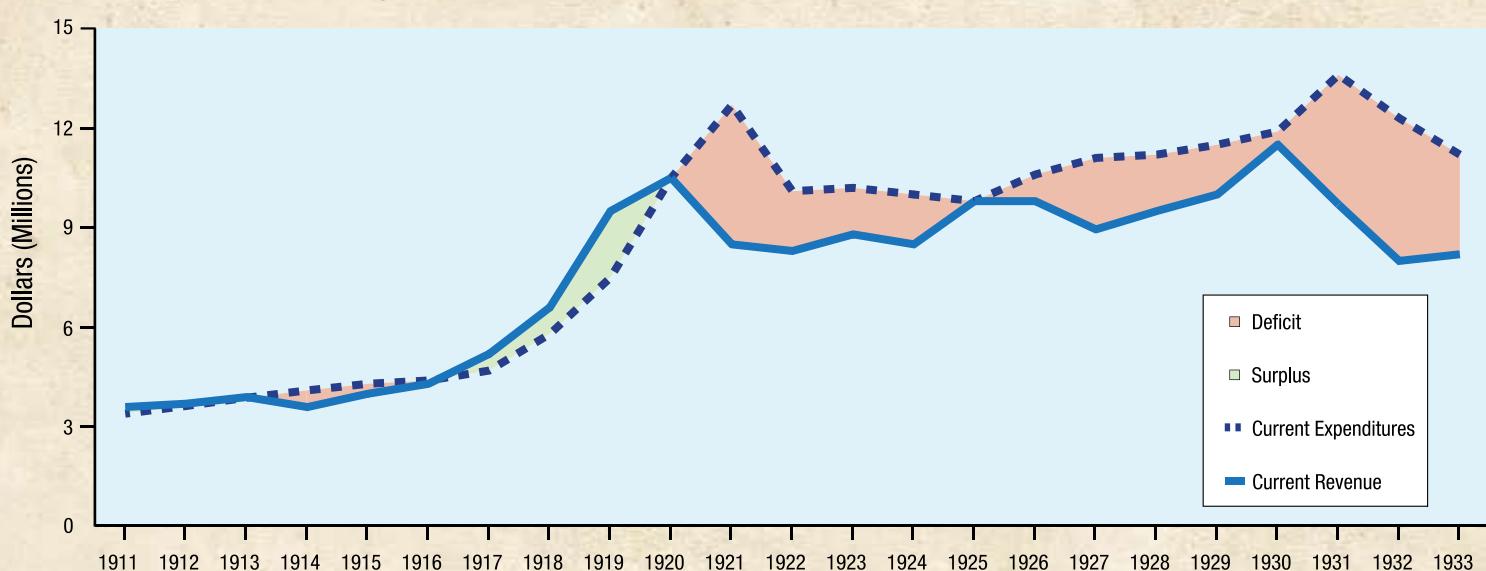


* Of this figure, exports of newsprint to the United Kingdom and the United States accounted for \$15 376 398.

**Values for agriculture during this period are as follows: 1928-29: \$25 928; 1929-30: \$40 892; 1930-31: \$20 140; 1931-32: 10 811.

Source: Amulree Report, 1933

5.36 Government revenue/expenditure 1911-1932



5.37

Imports by country 1927-1932 (dollars)

Countries	1927-28	1928-29	1929-30	1930-31	1931-32
Canada	12 141 574	11 832 415	12 992 600	10 675 348	8 351 188
United States	9 330 697	9 880 431	12 101 752	9 266 133	5 714 939
United Kingdom	4 986 838	6 211 906	5 527 575	4 192 300	3 182 625
British West Indies	256 374	282 440	191 675	178 156	194 282
Ceylon	269 208	257 671	262 032	185 575	152 269
Germany	65 103	122 954	140 146	207 778	119 429
Spain	181 825	174 236	132 995	86 859	61 924
Holland	69 648	87 081	84 964	89 639	45 516
Japan	4 008	13 687	19 703	26 226	43 044
Czechoslovakia	554	2 493	18 550	44 780	40 019
Belgium	33 279	15 095	27 823	49 994	37 074
France	54 882	52 214	36 248	29 168	24 482
St. Pierre	23 736	13 356	23 134	38 470	22 193
Dutch East Indies	-	32 721	39 791	17 681	19 699
Greece	42 293	48 818	34 731	16 306	19 346
Argentine Republic	18 672	31 708	41 307	26 530	18 263
Portugal	29 034	26 220	15 440	6 548	11 987
Norway	30 227	40 302	51 687	12 808	10 382
Various	99 241	111 633	128 998	111 402	66 990
Total	27 637 193	29 237 381	31 871 151	25 261 701	18 135 651



5.38 Fishers, St. John's Harbour

Poverty was common among Newfoundland and Labrador fishers during the Great Depression. As prices for dried cod tumbled throughout the 1930s, many fishers became continuously indebted to merchants who loaned them gear, food, and other supplies on credit and took their catch as payment. Some fishers fell into such deep debt that merchants refused to give them any more supplies on credit.

Unemployment and the “Dole”

The decline in demand for Newfoundland and Labrador products led to widespread unemployment as paper mills, logging and mining companies, and other industries reduced salaries and dismissed workers. In the fisheries, the income of everyone involved, from merchants to sharemen, plummeted. The combined increase in the cost of harvesting fish and the low prices received for a catch made it difficult for average fishers to make ends meet. Some Newfoundland merchants hesitated to provide credit to fishers or supply them for the fishery out of fear that the fishers would not be able to pay off their debts.

5.39 Example of food rations for a month

The following were the maximum food rations that an adult could receive based on the 1932 dole of \$1.80/month. This meant an adult was surviving on 6¢ a day.

- 25 lbs. flour
- 1 qt. molasses
- 3 3/4 lbs. fatback pork
- 2 lbs. beans
- 1 lb. split peas
- 2 lbs. cornmeal
- 3/4 lb. cocoa

With limited employment options available, thousands of Newfoundland and Labrador families were compelled to turn to government assistance. The “dole” varied over time and from place to place, but usually consisted of food rations totalling \$1.80 per person per month in the outports in 1932. There was no option to purchase food not on the government list. Vegetables were added to the list for families in St. John’s, but families in the outports were expected to grow their own.

Most people resented the dole. To them the amount of food was not enough and they had to accept whatever was offered. With the economy in serious decline and the national debt at unprecedented proportions, relief demands on revenue pushed the government to the edge of bankruptcy. Relieving officers were hired with sweeping powers to investigate applicants and to decide how much relief they should get. They could inspect bank accounts, reduce rations, or cut off relief completely if they learned that the applicant had money, vegetables, or other food. They could even force people to sell their possessions and live off the money received, before applying for relief.

Mayor Howlett's Appeal to Relieve Destitution

Instances Cited to Show the Urgent Need for Assistance—Work in the City to be Provided for Able-Bodied

The following appeal for aid for the destitute in the city was broadcast last night by Mayor Howlett through station TOWER.

To-night, my fellow citizens, the most pleasant part of this broadcast is in other hands than mine. It is my unfortunate duty to strike a discord in an otherwise beautiful harmony. I have tried my best—my knowledge of law, and, perhaps, with the right and strong sense of right, I speak in behalf of the spectators at court, George and Peter. What is your view, ladies, which may be "true as death, as bright as the sun"? What, when in this cold country, or ours, there are the two ends of those whose nature has not blessed with robust health, or whose destiny years but those unimportant against its cruel clause.

And unfortunately this year we have a greater number reduced to poverty than ever before, because added to the ordinary poor whom we have always had we have a long list of those whom circumstances had their central place placed in the same category. "Military contains a man who means well"; and, suffering the pangs of poverty to-night, are many who have never had a job because John, was no job for them to do. Now, among other causes in a person like that of the dagger of a broken spirit, I think it was Samuel Johnson who wrote, "The merciful tend to everywhere; the unmerciful tend to nowhere." This, I think, would be pretty depressing.

I want you now to come with me for a few minutes into the houses I visited today.

Two Typical Cases

John A. Johnson, and his young children live in the first case. John's youngest child is three years old. He number died three years ago this winter. (Cause of death) Nutritional

ring each other in a tumble down on the corner, trying to give and take the best of their bodies. There is no coal, or wood either, for two days. What about food? There are a few crusts of bread left by neighbours not much better off. What can we do? Even a few days more of this and a committee will solve the problem. For one or two of these kids, if you just do something. Let's do it and do it quickly. Come on out of here and let's see another home. John's was that of what we call the ordinary poor. Want and lack of education gave John much chance to improve his condition.

Praying for Death

Let's go to a different type of home. This one looks like a picture of the first. There are nice and clean here. But the cleanliness is not an index of poverty. There are only three people here, an aged couple (the man blind) and an invalid daughter, helpless for fourteen years with asthma. A son died two years ago. He had a thousand dollars life insurance. He kept three of them for as long, until six weeks ago in fact. There are two beds here, but not very soft to rest old and invalid bones on; and the blankets, patched and repatched, are as thin. All in this house are praying for one thing—Death. Yes, perhaps death would be kind to them, but what of you and I, now we are here? Food there is none. Food? A chair big in sticking out of the stove. A table big gone this way and a truck. Good day, father, we will get you back to heaven.

Now, we have been to two typical human body destitute. You go back to the radio set and I go back to the Newfoundland Hotel, and we will discuss it around our comfortable firesides. The warm glow of the fire, the bantering talk of those around the room, the joyful warmth of home and, let us hope, warmth of heart. Let us plan to

those who are deserving and also

P-2 SHEET-6000-W.T.C. 1934
Newfoundland Postal Telegraphs
Operating in Connection with
COMMERCIAL CABLES TO ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD

3 H M TSPD 26X UPPER ISLAND COVE DEC 27TH 1933

HON MR EMERSON
MIN OF JUSTICE
ST.JOHNS.



PEOPLE OF THIS PLACE STILL FACING STARVATION G.W.V.A. HAVE DONE ALL THAT LIES IN THEIR POWER CANNOT DO ANY MORE HAVE WIRED ALL AUTHORITIES WE NOW ASK YOU AS HEAD OF THE LAW OF THIS COUNTRY WHAT CAN BE DONE AND ARE WE ALLOWED TO LIE DOWN AND STARVE PLEASE SIR DO YOUR BEST TO HELP THE PEOPLE TO AVOID STARVATION PLEASE REPLY.

COMMERCIAL CABLES TO ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD

1 P K 57 COLLECT 26X BURGEO NF 4P JAN 24-1934

HON MINISTER OF JUSTICE, DEPT OF JUSTICE,
ST.JOHNS.

ABOUT FORTY MEN TO ME IN STARVING CONDITION I CONSULTED RELIEVING OFFICER WHO INFORMS ME NOTHING CAN BE DONE THEIR ALLOWANCE WILL NOT BE DUE TILL EIGHTH AND $\frac{1}{2}$ NINTH FEBRUARY STOP IMPOSSIBLE THESE FAMILIES EXIST FOURTEEN DAYS WITHOUT FOOD STOP CAN ANY ARRANGEMENTS BE MADE HELP OUT SITUATION IF NOTHING I FEAR CONSEQUENCES.

5.40 Telegrams to the Minister of Justice from community leaders asking for relief (top right)

Welfare Association New Department

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS WILL OPERATE DEPARTMENT TO SUPPLY CLOTHING

While thanking the public generally for their active and sympathetic co-operation in the work we are doing we wish to state that we are opening a new department to supply clothing of various kinds, and would further appeal to our charitable and philanthropic citizens for used garments, shoes, underwear, bed clothing, shop goods, etc.

The owner of the building in which we now operate has generously donated the two rooms above the kitchen for the work of this new department.

Our lady helpers will assort and prepare all such articles to meet the requirements of those cases which come before them from time to time.

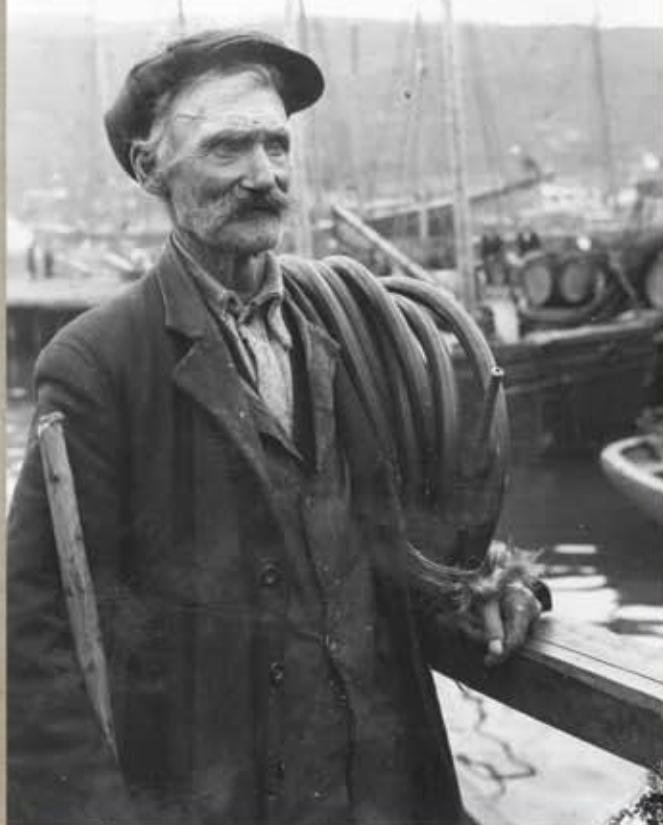
It is almost impossible to describe the cases of destitution that come before us daily. Men, women and children come to our Relief Station without sufficient clothing to cover them, much less protect them from the elements. While zero weather prevailed we have seen people with their naked feet literally on the ground, and in one case an old lady well over seventy came to our station on a bitterly cold evening with out a glove on her hands. She had walked about three miles from one of our outlying settlements. One of our lady assistants gave this poor soul her own gloves.

Under these circumstances we can assure you that regardless of its condition, anything you have in your home can be made use of by this station.

The Welfare Station is situated at 23 New Gower Street. Phone 1578W. G. H. MORGAN, Pres. J. F. FIFIELD, Sec.

5.41 Excerpt from The Evening Telegram, Jan. 6, 1932 (top left)

5.42 Excerpt from The Evening Telegram, Feb. 25, 1932 (right)



5.43 Many people went hungry during the Depression.

This picture of an unidentified man was taken at the St. John's waterfront in 1939.

Excerpt from *Connecting Rooms: A Tribute*, a Play by Florence Button

Florence Button's play, *Connecting Rooms*, pays tribute to "all the hardworking women who worked in the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador down through the centuries." In the following excerpt, Johannah, a stationer's daughter, talks about how working was more important than school during the Depression years.

Johannah: Ever since I can remember, I always loved going to school. Going down to the room in May and not getting home 'til up in the fall of the year meant I missed close unto three months going to school here in Carbonear every year, but that couldn't be helped. Times was hard on everyone then, in the 30s it was, and the depression was on ... all hands tryin' to make a livin' and keep body and soul together and like always, people tried to do their best to feed their families, whether 'twas goin' down to the Labrador to go fishin' or whatever else they had to do.

Of course I wasn't the only one who missed time in school and when families left for the rooms to go fishin' on the Labrador, the young ones had to go with 'em and the teachers understood that. I know I was one of the lucky ones. I always caught on quick and picked up everything the teacher showed us and every now and again I'd help the ones that couldn't. Even when we'd come back late up in October and we'd be after missin' nigh unto two months in school by then, I'd still catch up in a couple of weeks. Not everyone could though and some never did and they left school right young because it was just too hard on 'em to understand what they missed and they was always behind with their book learnin' and they got tired of it and give it up.

Growing Discontent

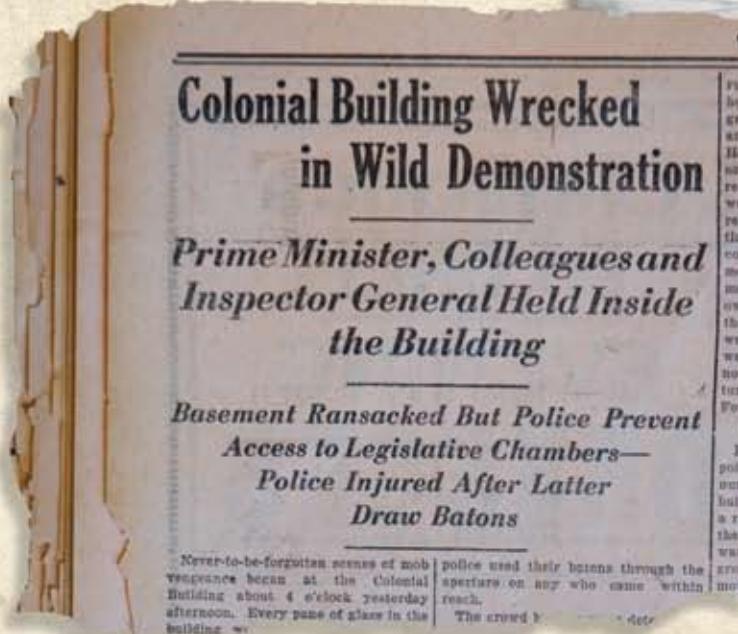
Throughout the 1920s and into the early years of the Great Depression, Newfoundlanders became increasingly discontented with their government. Falling wages, unemployment, inadequate public relief, and rampant nutritional diseases combined to create a desperate situation for many members of the labouring classes. Likewise, many of the major "Water Street" merchants of St. John's became concerned about their own financial stability as the crisis deepened, and it looked as if the government might have to default on its debts. Already threatened by collapsing export prices and by general financial difficulties, some merchants began to talk about suspending responsible government and replacing it temporarily with a commission that could put the country's affairs in order. There were those who saw the sacrifice of responsible government as a small price to pay for financial stability.

In addition, there were allegations of government mismanagement and corruption. In 1932, Finance Minister Peter Cashin resigned, and then accused other members of the government of tax evasion and forgery. He also said that Prime Minister Sir Richard Squires, had falsified Minutes of Council to cover

up improper financial transfers to himself and his constituency account. Such accusations angered the desperate unemployed, who deeply resented politicians taking money from the Treasury while they suffered the brunt of the Depression.

Opposition forces were out to get Squires, who was vulnerable, given the charges against him, and his evasions. The Opposition took advantage of this situation to organize a demonstration on April 5, 1932. Some merchants gave their employees a half-day holiday to attend, and approximately 10 000 people turned up to protest the Squires government. At the Colonial Building, the protest turned violent and the building was ransacked. Prime Minister Squires barely escaped without injury and was voted out of government in the June election. In the aftermath of the riot, the government summoned a British light cruiser, the H.M.S. *Dragon*, to help prevent further disorder. With confidence in the government at a low and the continuing harsh conditions of the Depression, many people began to advocate for a new form of leadership for the country – government by a commission.

5.45 Excerpt from *The Evening Telegram*, April 6, 1932



5.46 The April 5, 1932 riot in front of the Colonial Building

Experiencing The Arts

Building on the work you did in the earlier *Experiencing The Arts* exercise in this chapter:

- Decide on the setting for your scene. As you make this choice, remember you are writing a scene which is part of a play that would probably be performed in a theatre. Jot down some notes on

what the setting would look like and how this could be accomplished with props on a stage.

- Using jot notes, plot a beginning, middle, and end to your scene. As you do this, remember the rules of unity for scenes created by Aristotle. (See page 395.)

Questions:

1. Create a diagram that illustrates the sequence of events between the end of the First World War and the civil unrest of the early 1930s.
2. Who might have fared better during the depression, people living in rural or urban areas? Explain.
3. What government programs emerged in response to the issues that arose during the Great Depression?
4. What do the primary sources in this lesson tell you about the experiences of some families during the 1930s? Research the experiences of others from this time period. Then, with a partner, create a short one-act play that illustrates the difficulties faced by a family during this time.