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


EIGHT PAGES.

THE DAILY NEWS.

EIGHT PAGES.

VOL. II ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 1914. NO. 119

The British Empire is at War and all Europe is Ablaze.

THE PEOPLES AUCTIONEER

AUCTION

At DOBYAN'S, Topsail Road,

Monday next, 10th inst.,

Don't miss this!

Baseball To-Day.

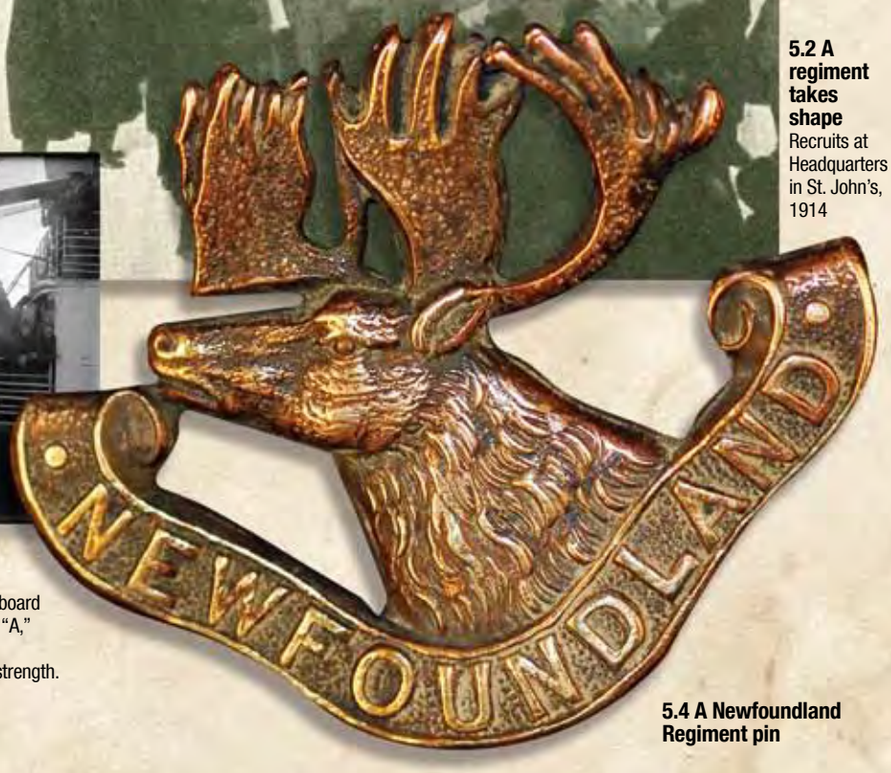
GRAND FALLS vs. ST. JOHN'S,

War Declared at 7.30 O'Clock Last Night.

Half a Billion [illegible] Voted for Defence

5.2 A regiment takes shape
Recruits at Headquarters in St. John's, 1914

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, so their puttees were made from blue 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.

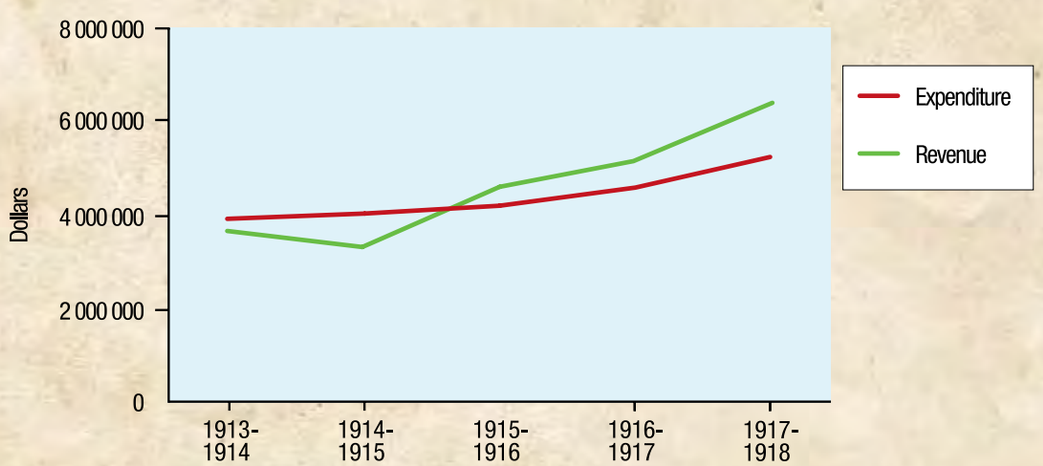
Newfoundland experienced rapid social, political, and economic changes. Young men from all over the island and Labrador came to St. John's to train and then to leave for battle overseas. Political parties united in support of the war effort, and the local economy boomed.

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.

5.9 Government revenues 1913-1918

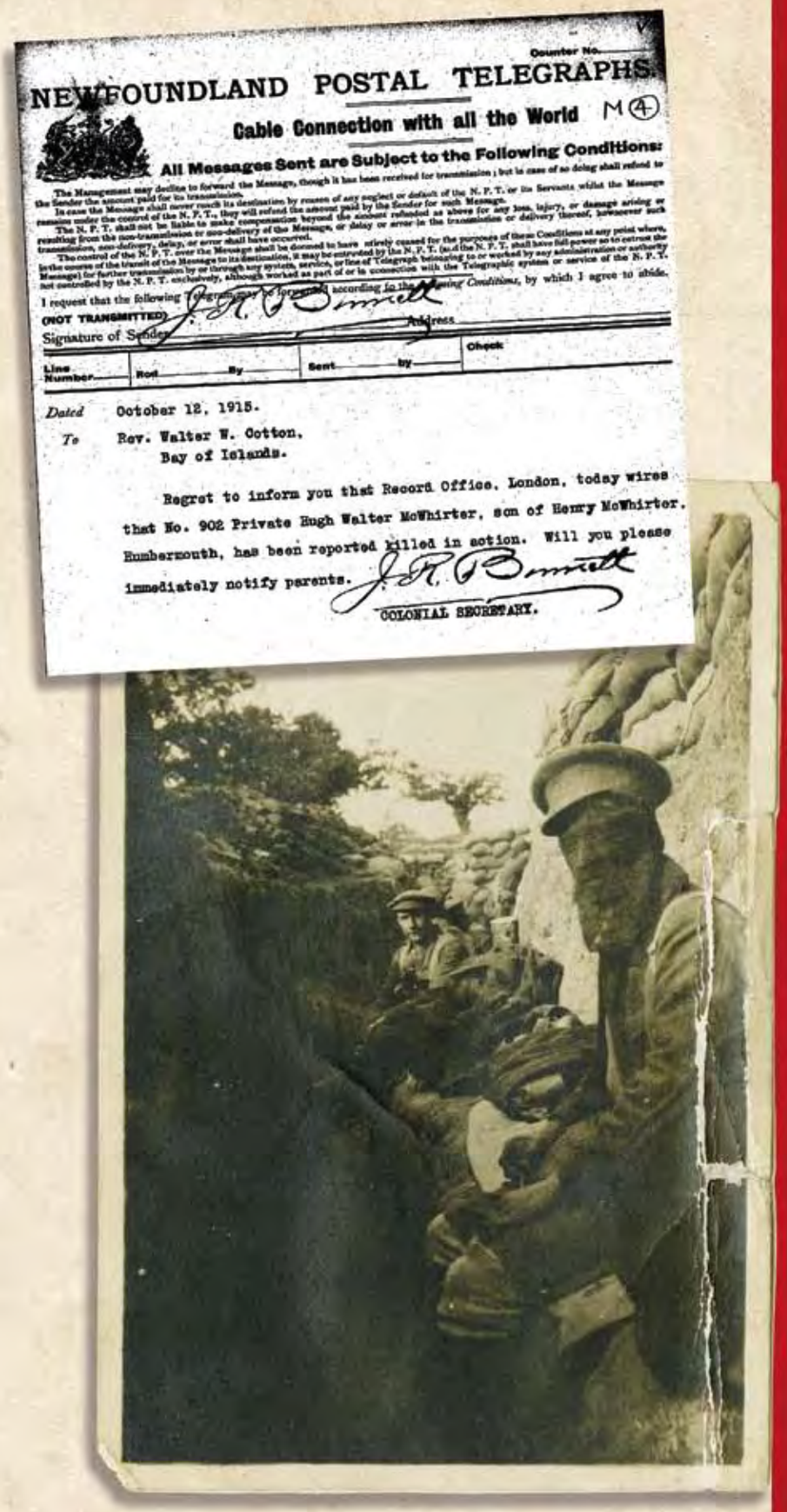


OUR MEN AT THE FRONT

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.



NEWFOUNDLAND POSTAL TELEGRAPHS.

Cable Connection with all the World

All Messages Sent are Subject to the Following Conditions:

Dated October 12, 1915.

To Rev. Walter W. Cotton,
Bay of Islands.

Regret to inform you that Record Office, London, today wires that No. 902 Private Hugh Walter McWhirter, son of Henry McWhirter, Bumbermouth, has been reported killed in action. Will you please immediately notify parents.

COLONIAL SECRETARY.

5.10 Telegraph
(top) Most soldiers' files contain at least a few postal telegraghs, 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.

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

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

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**

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.

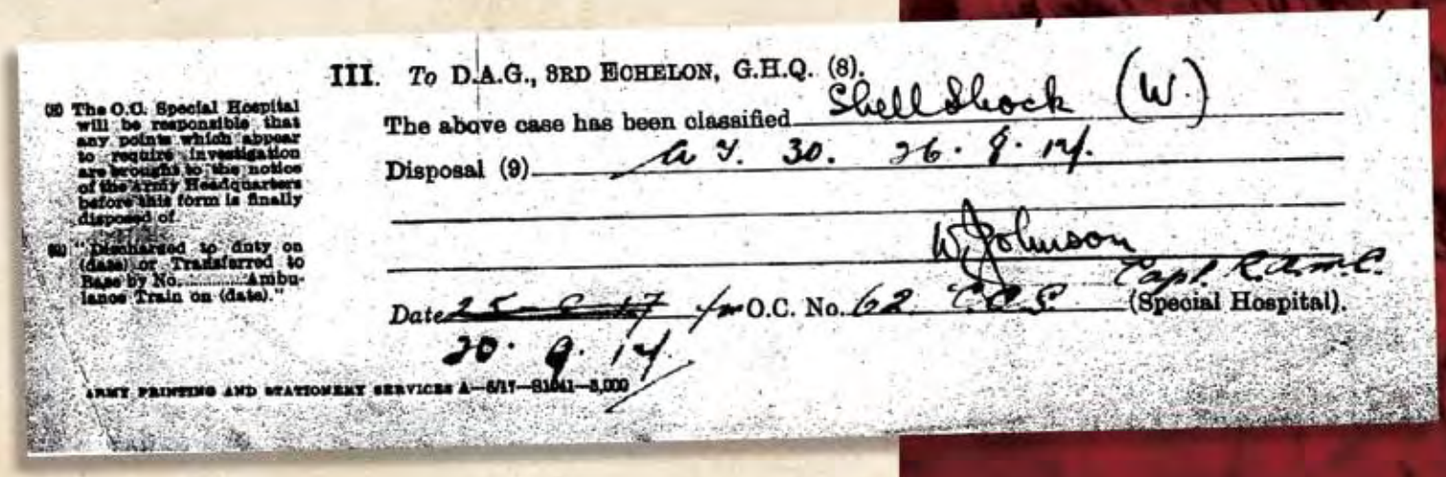
The loss of so many young people created difficulties for those left behind. For the families of men who did volunteer, there was the tremendous emotional stress of separation, as well as numerous practical concerns. With the absence of their male relatives, women, children, and the elderly sometimes 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 in Beaumont-Hamel, France.


(8) 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.

(9) "Discharged to duty on (date) or Transferred to Base by No. ..... Ambulance Train on (date)."

III. To D.A.G., 3RD ECHELON, G.H.Q. (8).

The above case has been classified Shell Shock (W.)

Disposal (9) a. y. 30. 26. 9. 14.

W. Johnson Capt. R.A.M.C.

Date 25 Sept 17 for O.C. No. 62 C.C.S. (Special Hospital).

30. 9. 14.

ARMY PRINTING AND STATIONERY SERVICES A—6/17—81041—5,000

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:

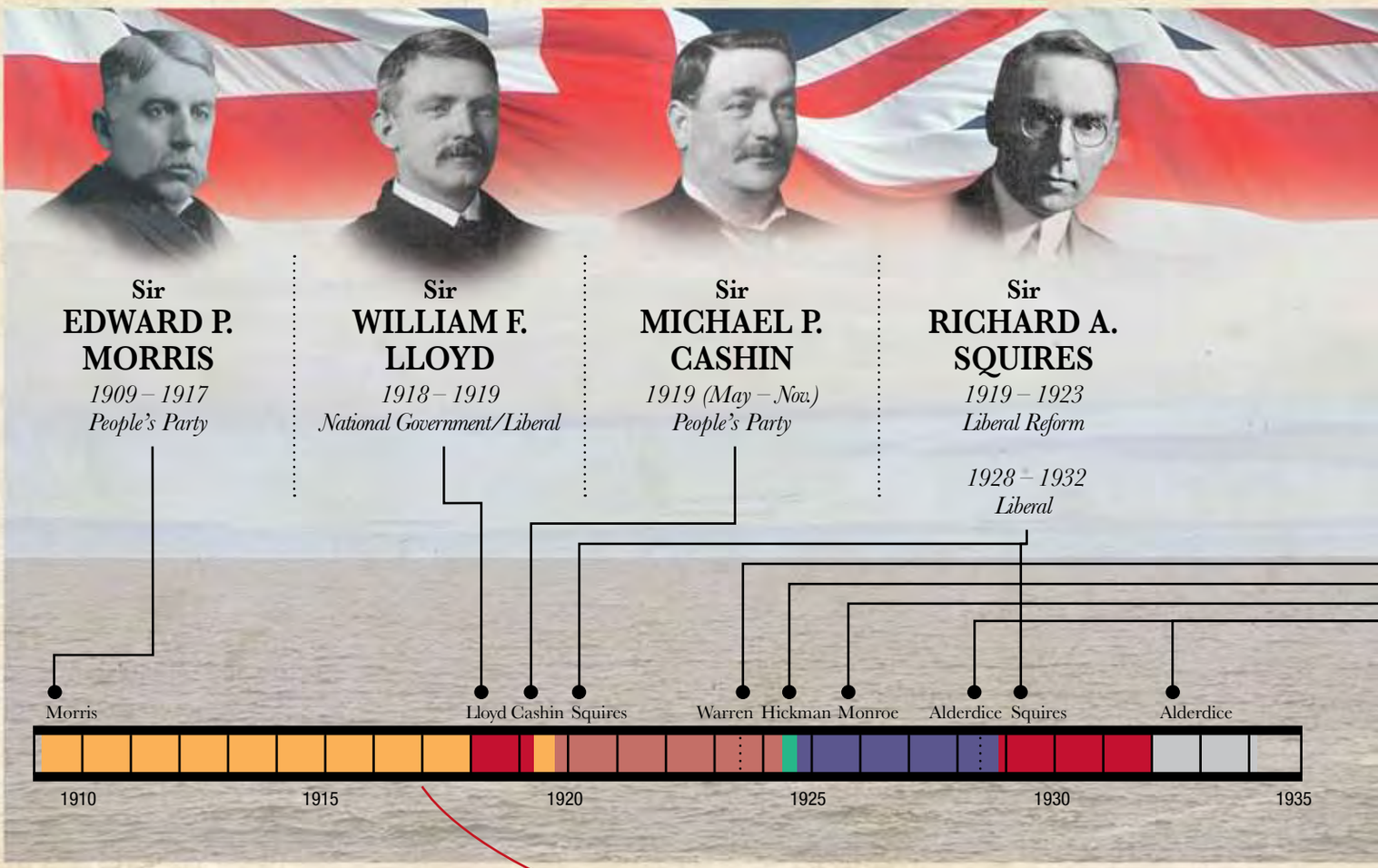
- Select a topic/event/person
- Decide what in particular it is about this subject that you want to explore in your scene. You may need to do some additional research to help you with this.
- Decide what characters will be in the scene. For each character, write a brief character bio that explains his or her background and how it affects his or her motivation in the scene you are about to create.

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

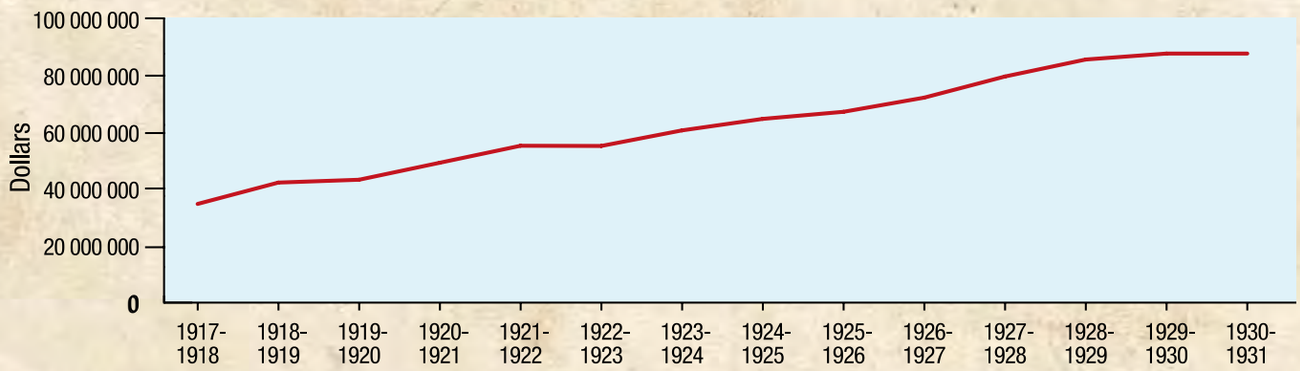
This wartime boom was temporary, and the war in fact brought long-term problems. In 1914, the public debt was $30.5 million. During the war, the government borrowed $15 million, increasing the public debt to $43 million. By 1918, almost a quarter of the colony's revenue was needed to pay the interest.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

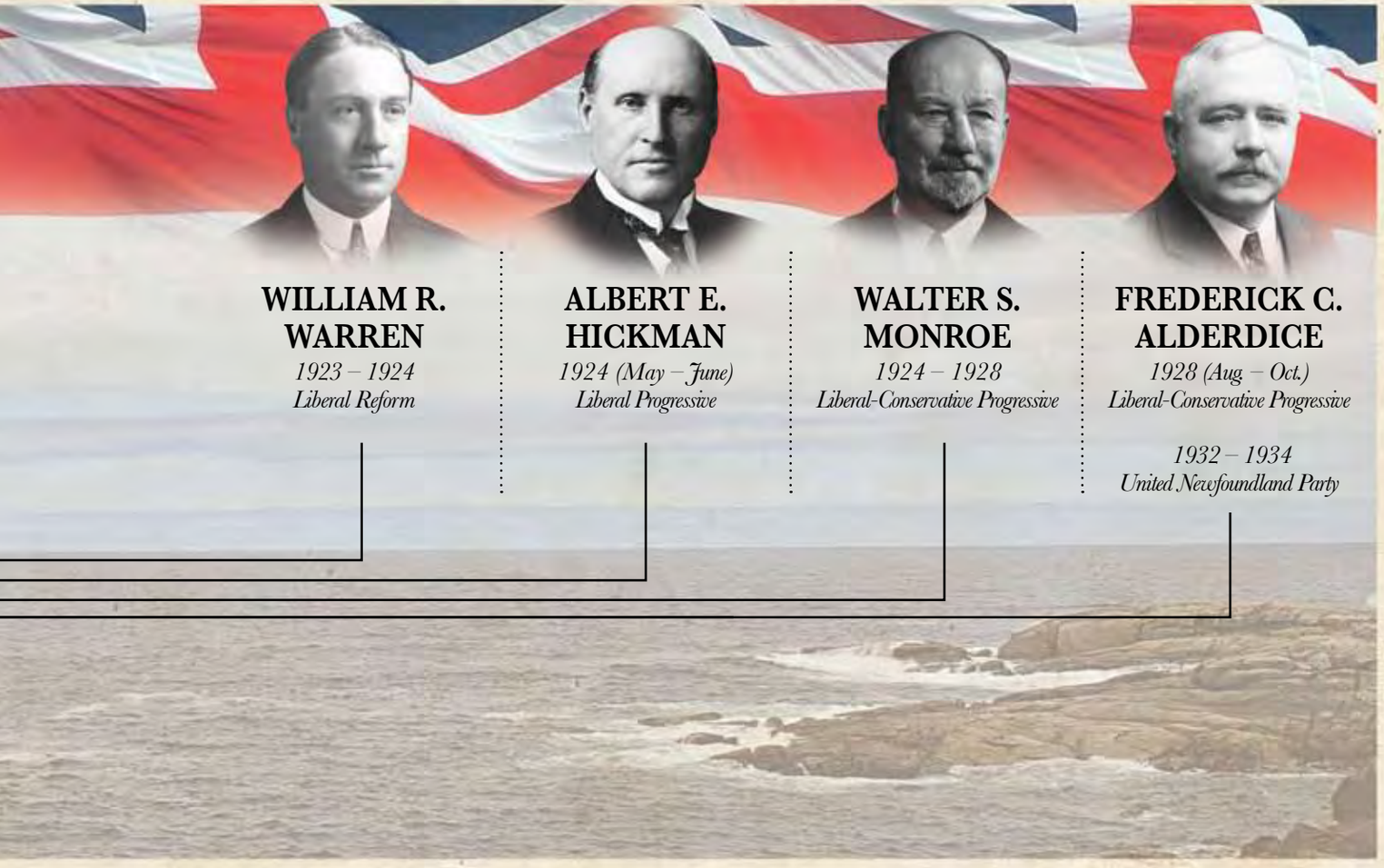
By the early 1930s, the Newfoundland government was in serious financial difficulty, and this was compounded by the Great Depression. In 1933, almost $100 million in debt, the colony turned to Great Britain for help. Thus began a series of events that would lead Newfoundland to the suspension of responsible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

*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.

National Government is formed.

5.21 Funded public debt





WILLIAM R. WARREN
1923 – 1924
Liberal Reform

ALBERT E. HICKMAN
1924 (May – June)
Liberal Progressive

WALTER S. MONROE
1924 – 1928
Liberal-Conservative Progressive

FREDERICK C. ALDERDICE
1928 (Aug – Oct.)
Liberal-Conservative Progressive

1932 – 1934
United Newfoundland Party

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.

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

*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.

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. Harder.

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.

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

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.

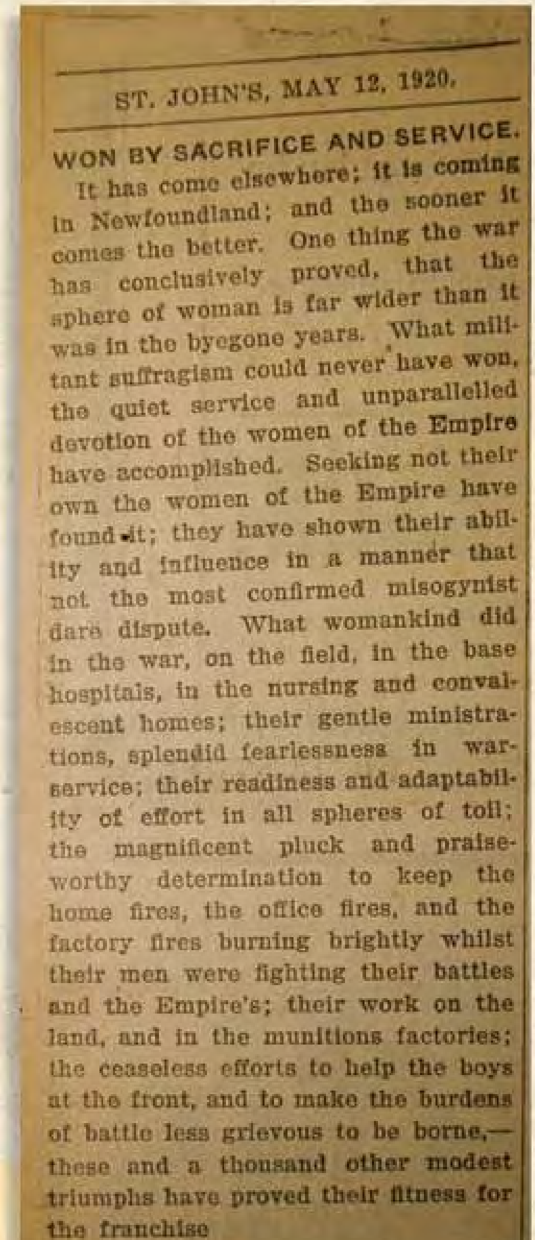
The Newfoundland Women's Franchise League, 1920-1925

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

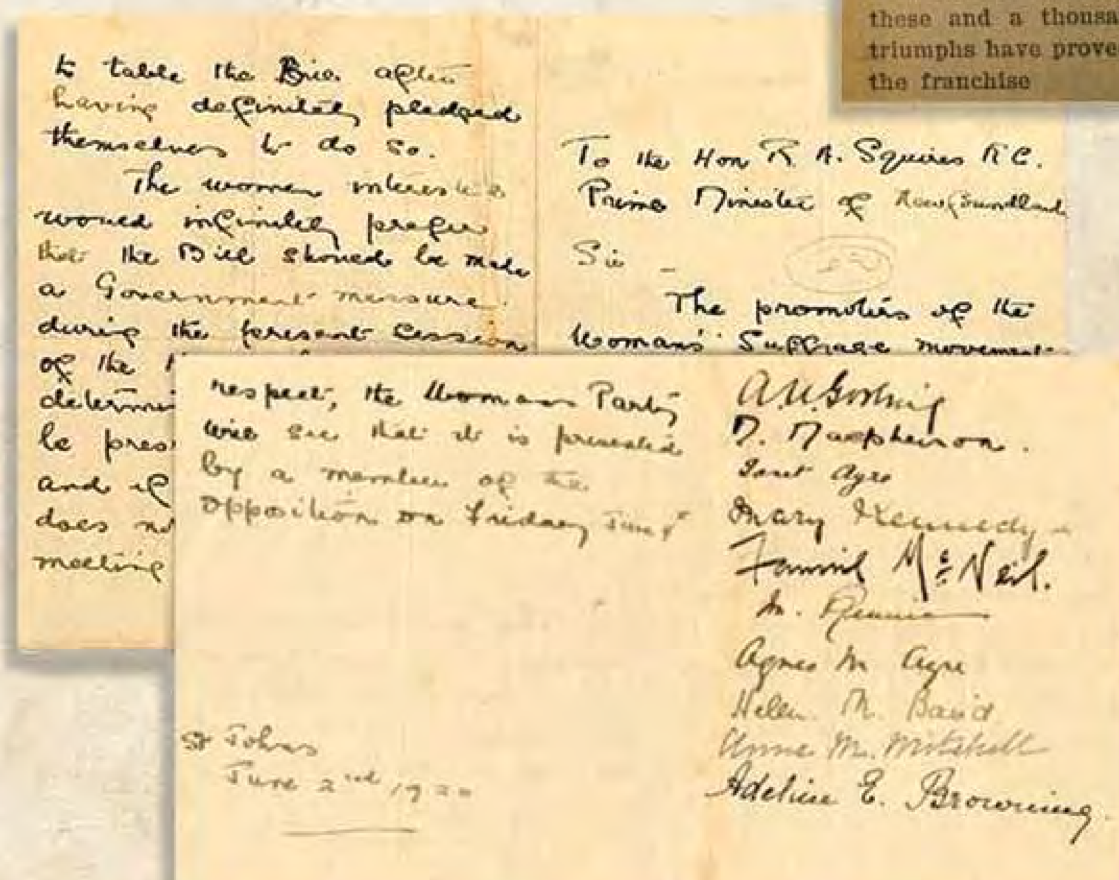


ST. JOHN'S, MAY 12, 1920.

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 byegone 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

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



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

Sir –

The promoters of the Woman's Suffrage movement

to table 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

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

A. N. Gosling
D. Macpherson
Janet Ayre
Mary Kennedy
Fannie McNeil
A. Rennie
Agnes M. Ayre
Helen M. Baird
Anne M. Mitchell
Adeline E. Browning

St Johns
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.

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.

*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.

**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.

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.

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 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.

"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*

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:

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?

TOPIC 5.3

The Great Depression

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.

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

**For example, in 1932–1933, 75 per cent of the government's revenue came from customs duties. Smaller sources of income included income taxes and liquor sales.


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 going shivering to bed . . . It will help mothers and families that provide for their needs.

Give to this worthy cause? who will be benefitted are

OUNDLAND, OCTOBER 29, 1929—6

Financial Panic in New York

Market Hysteria Causes Sensational Fall

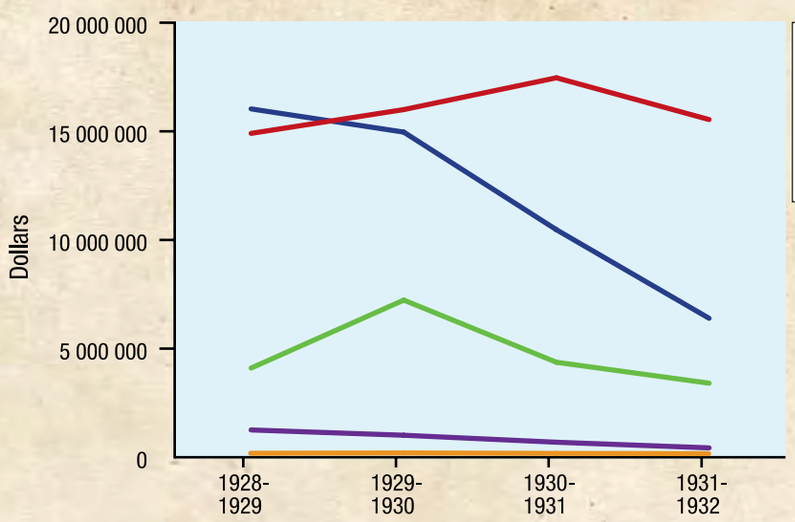
STARTLING DECLINES MARKED THURSDAY'S TRADING

NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE

5.33 Civic relief ad from *The Evening Telegram*, Feb. 16, 1932
The Civic Relief Committee was established by St. John's Mayor Charles Howlett in 1932 to help the city's poor during the Depression.

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

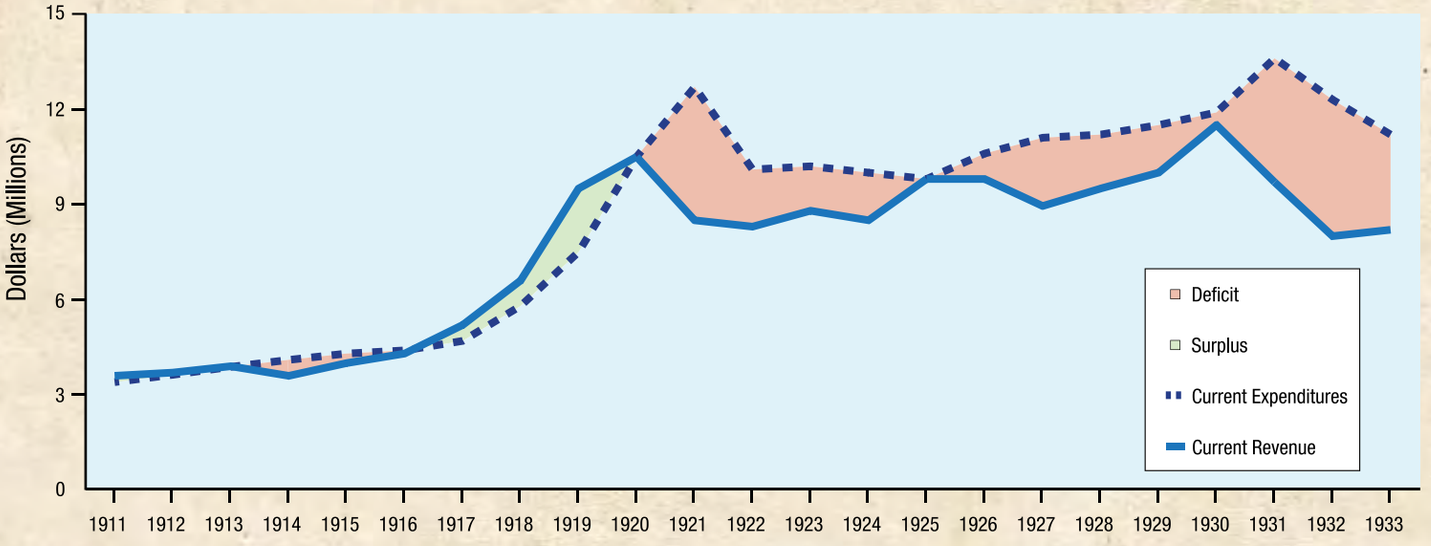


* Of this figure, exports of newsprint to the United Kingdom and the United States accounted for $15 376 398.

**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.

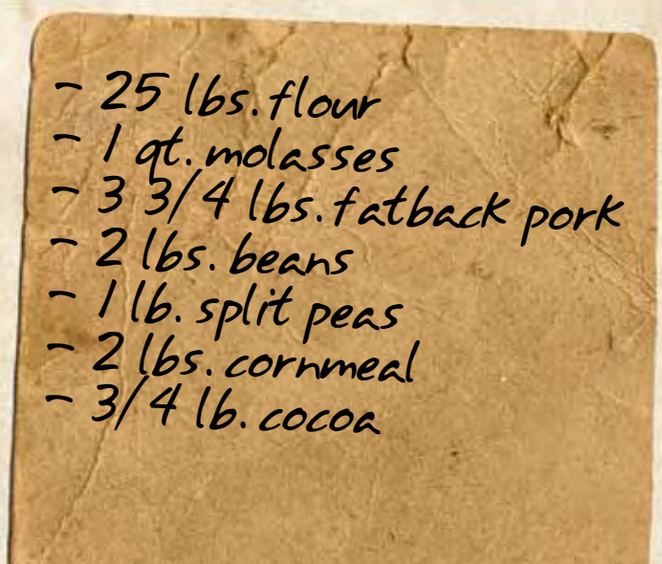
Unemployment and the "Dole"

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.

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.

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.



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

[illegible]

PRAYING FOR DEATH

[illegible]

NOT CONNECTED WITH COUNCIL

[illegible]

TWO TYPICAL CASES

[illegible]

Newfoundland Postal Telegraphs

Operating in Connection with

COMMERCIAL CABLES TO ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD

3 H M 73PO SEX UPPER ISLAND COVE DEC 27TH 1P

HON MR EMERSON

MIN OF JUSTICE

STJOHNS.

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 SEX BURGEO NF 4P JANY 24-1934.

HON MINISTER OF JUSTICE, DEPT OF JUSTICE,

STJOHNS.

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 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)

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

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

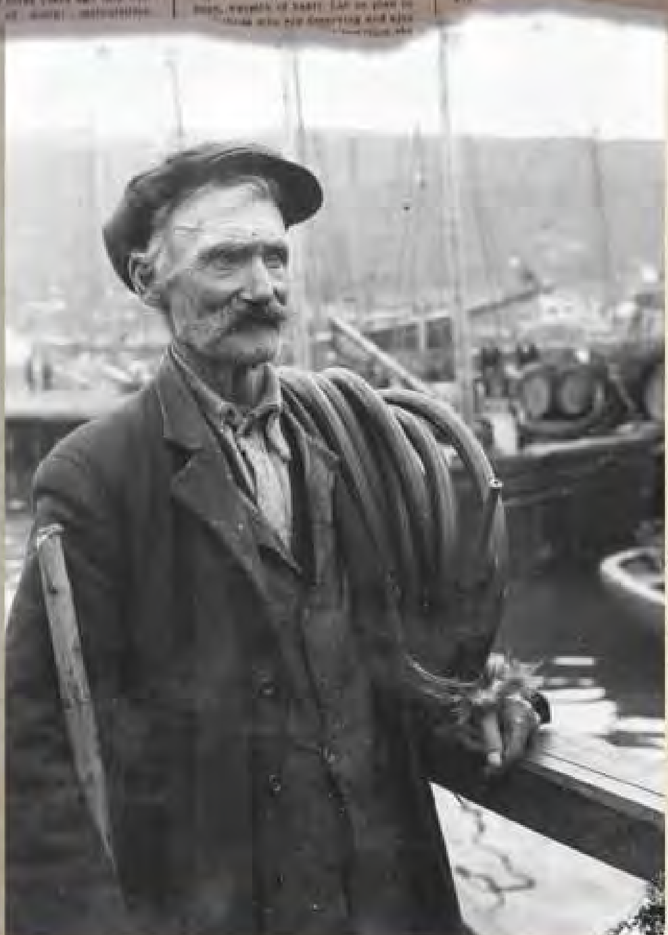
Our lady helpers will assort and prepare all such articles to meet the requirements of those cases which come before them from time to time.

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 without 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.



5.43 Many people went hungry during the Depression.
This picture of an unidentified man was taken at the St. John's waterfront in 1939.

5.44

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

Colonial Building Wrecked in Wild Demonstration

Prime Minister, Colleagues and Inspector General Held Inside the Building

Basement Ransacked But Police Prevent Access to Legislative Chambers— Police Injured After Latter Draw Batons

Never-to-be-forgotten scenes of mob vengeance began at the Colonial Building about 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon. Every pane of glass in the building

police used their batons through the aperture on any who came within reach.

The crowd

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.

TOPIC 5.4

The Amulree Report

Royal Commissions are appointed by federal or provincial governments to investigate specific issues. How does this process benefit citizens?

Frequently Royal Commissions are headed by judges. Why might this be the case?

Turning to Britain

Newfoundland's financial problems, high unemployment, and poverty during the Great Depression* were not unique. Countries worldwide faced the same difficulties, and those that relied on the export of primary products were often the hardest hit.* The end of the Squires scandal-filled administration in 1932 did nothing to improve the country's financial situation. By 1933, Newfoundland was on the verge of bankruptcy. When Squires' successor, Prime Minister Frederick Alderdice, announced that Newfoundland would have to partially default on its debts, the British government reacted with alarm. Driven by larger global concerns, it told Alderdice that this was unacceptable. A default would have a negative impact on the financial markets and on the credit of Canada and the other British dominions, and set a dangerous precedent.

To prevent Newfoundland from defaulting on its debt, Britain and Canada paid two-thirds of the country's interest payment for January 1, 1933. This payment was made on condition that the Newfoundland government accept the appointment of a Royal Commission to examine the country's future. Newfoundland also had to promise to support the Commission's recommendations in the Legislature.

The Newfoundland Royal Commission 1933

On February 17, 1933, an Imperial Royal Commission was appointed by the British government "to examine into the future of Newfoundland and, in particular, to report on the financial situation and prospects therein." This effectively put Newfoundland's future into the hands of three non-Newfoundlanders – a British peer, Lord Amulree, and two Canadian bankers (See fig. 5.47.) The commissioners held 100 formal hearings and conducted 260 interviews in St. John's and across the island.** They also gathered evidence through written testimony and informal visits to people in their homes and workplaces. In their final report, known as the Amulree Report, the commissioners noted: "It was our special object at every place we visited to see and talk with fishermen and workpeople in their natural setting, as well as merchants, doctors, clergymen and others …" The commissioners ended their hearings in July 1933 and published their report three months later.

While the Commission was conducting its research, officials in London were having their own discussions on the Newfoundland crisis on the other side of the Atlantic.

5.47 Members of the Newfoundland Royal Commission, 1933

Lord Amulree, c. 1933
Lord Amulree was the British representative and chairman of the Royal Commission.

Charles A. Magrath, c. 1907–13
Magrath, a banker, was the Canadian representative on the Commission.

Sir William E. Stavert
was the Newfoundland representative, although he was actually a banker from Canada. (No Newfoundlanders or Labradorians served on the Commission.) Stavert also was a financial advisor to the Newfoundland government in 1932.

*Although the effects of the Great Depression were felt worldwide for several years, the hard times in Newfoundland and Labrador lasted a full decade.

**The commissioners did not travel to the Northern Peninsula or to Labrador, but they collected evidence from these areas.

They produced their own plan for Newfoundland, which Lord Amulree was expected to recommend. Newfoundland's public debt would be rescheduled at a lower rate of interest and guaranteed by the British government. This was essentially a disguised default, but would satisfy bondholders and prevent panic in the global markets. However, financial intervention and assistance of this type were incompatible with responsible government. Thus Newfoundland would have to agree to give up that system of government temporarily, and allow Britain to administer the country through an appointed commission.

This became the central recommendation of the Newfoundland Royal Commission, whose report was published in October 1933. The Commission's report argued that Newfoundland's financial crisis was the result of government mismanagement, inefficiency, corruption, and financial irresponsibility. It described the average Newfoundlander as "simple-minded" and easily exploited by corrupt politicians. According to the Report, the people had lost faith in their political leaders and in the system of responsible government. They wanted assistance from Britain, and they wanted change.

Citing the political corruption of successive Newfoundland governments, the Amulree Report called for the temporary suspension of responsible government and tighter British controls through the establishment of a Commission of Government. The Commission of Government would consist of six commissioners (three from Britain and three from Newfoundland) and would be led by a British Governor answerable to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs in London. If this was established, Britain would guarantee and reschedule Newfoundland's debt, which was still to be paid by the Newfoundland government.

The Amulree Report was well-received by the press and most members of the public at the time. At the British government's request, Alderdice did not hold an election or a referendum on the issue. Instead it was brought to the legislature in November, where an address to the Crown was passed asking for the suspension of the constitution. In February 1934 the Commission of Government took office.

Britain to Govern Newfoundland; First Dominion to Lose Status

Reverts to the Rank of a Crown Colony During Financial Crisis —Royal Commission Reports 'Desperate Condition'— Debts Will Be Funded by London.

Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

LONDON, Nov. 21.—Newfoundland will lose her status as a self-governing dominion for a time under sweeping emergency measures which the government submitted to the House of Commons today.

The proposals were made on the recommendation of a Royal Commission of Inquiry, headed by Lord Amulree, which found financial and political conditions in Newfoundland "desperate" and the islanders facing utter ruin. This is the first time in the history of the British Empire that any dominion has had to hand its sovereignty back to the mother country.

Strictly speaking, Britain cannot force any dominion to surrender its self-government, but a formal request for British help is expected to come in a few days from Premier Frederick C. Alderdice and the Newfoundland Government.

Direct British rule in the island is expected to last until its affairs have been pulled out of the morass in which the commission found them. The colony will be ruled in the next few years or longer by a British Governor assisted by a commission of three Britons and three Newfoundlanders. Their immediate task will be to reduce the island's debt burden and the first move, announced today, is the conversion of the existing Newfoundland obligations into a 3 per cent sterling issue redeemable in ten years.

The report of the commission of inquiry constitutes a scathing indictment of financial mismanagement and political corruption in Newfoundland ever since the war. It declares that Newfoundland has been living hopelessly beyond her means and that her scattered fishing communities have been demoralized by a vicious credit system under which they have become virtual serfs of the merchants of St. John's.

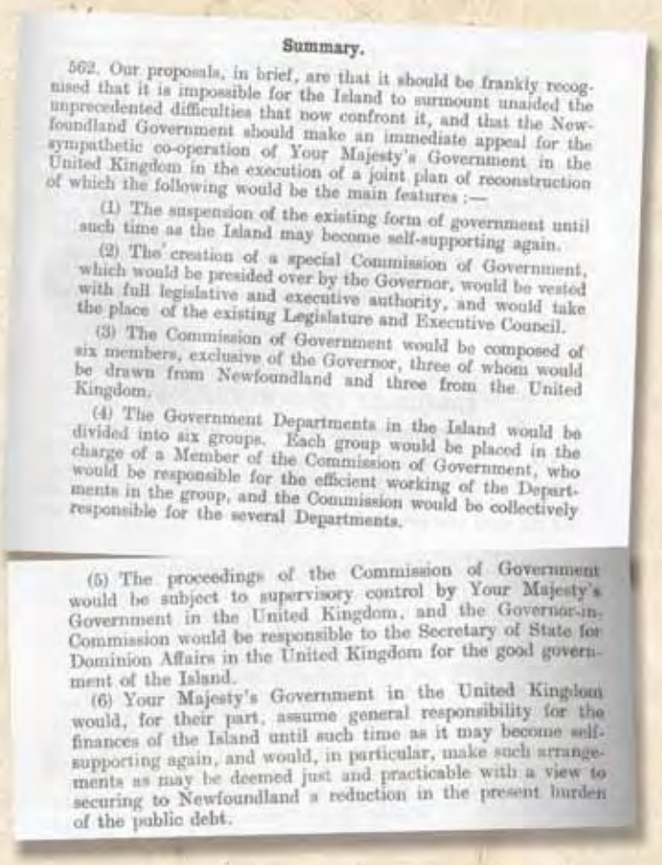
Moreover, the people have been victimized by politicians, according to the report, and by "a continuing process of greed, graft and corruption which has left few classes of the community untouched by its insidious influence."

Among the recommendations

Continued on Page Fifteen

The New York Times
Published: November 22, 1933

5.48 Excerpt from *The New York Times*, Nov. 22, 1933



Summary.

562. Our proposals, in brief, are that it should be frankly recognised that it is impossible for the Island to surmount unaided the unprecedented difficulties that now confront it, and that the Newfoundland Government should make an immediate appeal for the sympathetic co-operation of Your Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom in the execution of a joint plan of reconstruction of which the following would be the main features :—

(1) The suspension of the existing form of government until such time as the Island may become self-supporting again.

(2) The creation of a special Commission of Government, which would be presided over by the Governor, would be vested with full legislative and executive authority, and would take the place of the existing Legislature and Executive Council.

(3) The Commission of Government would be composed of six members, exclusive of the Governor, three of whom would be drawn from Newfoundland and three from the United Kingdom.

(4) The Government Departments in the Island would be divided into six groups. Each group would be placed in the charge of a Member of the Commission of Government, who would be responsible for the efficient working of the Departments in the group, and the Commission would be collectively responsible for the several Departments.

(5) The proceedings of the Commission of Government would be subject to supervisory control by Your Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, and the Governor-in-Commission would be responsible to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs in the United Kingdom for the good government of the Island.

(6) Your Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would, for their part, assume general responsibility for the finances of the Island until such time as it may become self-supporting again, and would, in particular, make such arrangements as may be deemed just and practicable with a view to securing to Newfoundland a reduction in the present burden of the public debt.

5.49 Summary from the Amulree Report for a "joint plan of reconstruction"

Questions:

1. Why was a Royal Commission appointed in Newfoundland in 1933?
2. How did the Commission gather information? Was this an effective approach?
3. What was the main recommendation of the Amulree Report? What else could the Royal Commission have recommended as a solution to Newfoundland's problems?

DIMENSIONS OF THINKING
PERSPECTIVE

–Was the Amulree Report objective?–

The Amulree Report of 1933 presented a version of Newfoundland and Labrador's history that has influenced future generations' understanding of events.

The report used Newfoundland's political history to justify the suspension of responsible government and the establishment of the Commission of Government. It did this by emphasizing widespread corruption and inefficiency in Newfoundland politics. Because of the official nature of the document, its narrative of our history remained relatively unchallenged for decades. However, it is important to keep in mind that the report was not written as an unbiased text.

When reading and interpreting a historical document, it is crucial to keep in mind the following factors:

1) Authorship: Who wrote the document and for what audience? Was the author qualified to comment on what he or she wrote about? What was the author's purpose or agenda? Is there a conflict of interest that might prejudice the portrayal of the content?

2) Context: What were the social, political, and economic circumstances of the time in which the document was written?

3) Information: Did the author of the report have access to accurate information from a variety of sources? Is the report consistent with other accounts of the time?

Today most historians agree that the Amulree Report's historical analysis and its conclusions about the financial crisis in Newfoundland and Labrador were both flawed: its criticisms of politicians and of the political system here were unfair and exaggerated; it did not give enough credit to the impact of the First World War and the Great Depression on Newfoundland and Labrador's financial situation; and the creators of the report had a conflict of interest in that Britain did not want to consider Newfoundland's default* as a serious option.

*Of course, in the end, Britain did choose default for Newfoundland's debt – but that default was disguised in the suspension of responsible government.

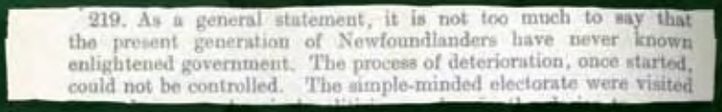
5.50 Excerpts from the Amulree Report

(1) The Island is in extreme financial difficulties. These have been intensified by the world depression, but they are due primarily to persistent extravagance and neglect of proper financial principles on the part of successive Governments during the years 1920-31.

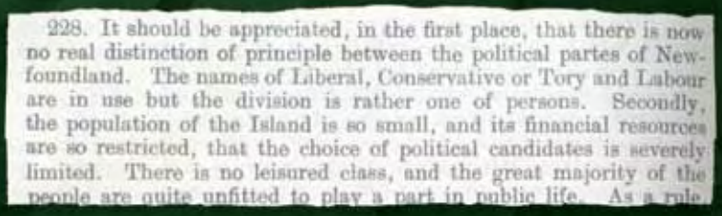
210. Shrewd and suspicious in their business dealings, the people exhibit a child-like simplicity when confronted with matters outside their own immediate horizon. This simplicity political candidates have not been slow to exploit. There is no system of compulsory

"The characterizations of our past that the Royal Commission members heard from Newfoundlanders were accepted as true, since they were useful in justifying the political recommendations the British had in mind. The false objectivity of outsiders and the official nature of the Royal Commission lent credence to these interpretations, raising them to the status of scientific truth – and over the next six decades many authors have uncritically accepted these conclusions about the nature of Newfoundland's economy and society."

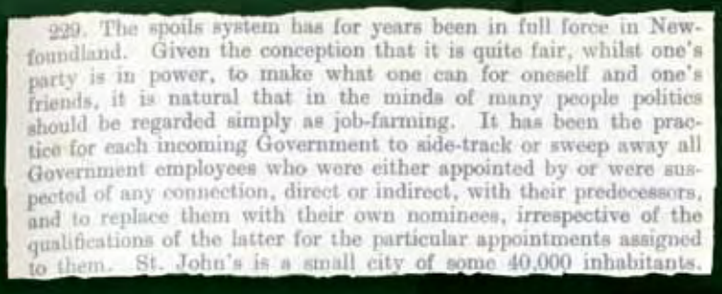
– Jeff Webb, historian



219. As a general statement, it is not too much to say that the present generation of Newfoundlanders have never known enlightened government. The process of deterioration, once started, could not be controlled. The simple-minded electorate were visited



228. It should be appreciated, in the first place, that there is now no real distinction of principle between the political parties of Newfoundland. The names of Liberal, Conservative or Tory and Labour are in use but the division is rather one of persons. Secondly, the population of the Island is so small, and its financial resources are so restricted, that the choice of political candidates is severely limited. There is no leisured class, and the great majority of the people are quite unfitted to play a part in public life. As a rule



229. The spoils system has for years been in full force in Newfoundland. Given the conception that it is quite fair, whilst one's party is in power, to make what one can for oneself and one's friends, it is natural that in the minds of many people politics should be regarded simply as job-farming. It has been the practice for each incoming Government to side-track or sweep away all Government employees who were either appointed by or were suspected of any connection, direct or indirect, with their predecessors, and to replace them with their own nominees, irrespective of the qualifications of the latter for the particular appointments assigned to them. St. John's is a small city of some 40,000 inhabitants.

Questions:

1. What evidence is there that the Amulree Report was biased?
2. Why was the Amulree Report so easily accepted?
3. What alternatives to the establishment of Commission of Government were suggested by Charles Magrath? Which alternative would most benefit Newfoundland?

DID NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR HAVE ANY OTHER OPTIONS?

Newfoundland's strongest defender on the Commission was actually the Canadian nominee, Charles A. Magrath. He felt there were other options for the Newfoundland Government besides giving up responsible government. He argued that the banks were forcing Newfoundland to pay interest at rates that were excessive during a global economic depression and supported Alderdice's original proposal for default, which would have decreased Newfoundland's interest rates to three per cent. However, the British government refused to let Newfoundland default on its debt.

Magrath criticized the Royal Commission for its faulty analysis of Newfoundland's financial crisis and suggested that Newfoundland needed practical financial assistance which could be provided in two ways: 1) Britain could cancel Newfoundland's war debt – something that had been done for several European nations in the aftermath of the First World War; and 2) Canada could purchase Labrador, on condition that Newfoundland could re-purchase the territory in the future. However, neither of these solutions was seriously considered.

Believing that Newfoundland was eventually going to join confederation, Magrath also advocated for increased Canadian activity in Newfoundland. However, many Canadian politicians, including Prime Minister R.B. Bennett, were hesitant to assist Newfoundland when much of Canada was in similar economic distress. Although the lack of Canadian financial assistance weakened Magrath's position on the Commission, he continued to defend the best interests of Newfoundland (with a view to confederation) until the end.

TOPIC 5.5

Commission of Government

What is the best system of government?

Under what circumstances do you think a government should be replaced?

5.51 Inauguration of the Commission of Government, Feb. 16, 1934
Governor David Murray Anderson speaks at the ceremony which was held at the Newfoundland Hotel in St. John's. As Governor, Anderson served as the Chairman of the Commission in 1934. The other members of the 1934 Commission were Sir John Hope Simpson (Britain), Natural Resources; Thomas Lodge (Britain), Public Utilities; E.N.R. Trentham (Britain), Finance; Frederick C. Alderdice (Newfoundland), Home Affairs and Education; William R. Howley (Newfoundland), Justice; and John C. Puddester (Newfoundland), Public Health and Welfare.

Introduction

In February 1934, responsible government in Newfoundland was replaced by a Commission of Government. The Commission consisted of seven men appointed by the British government: the governor, who was also chairman of the Commission, three British* appointees, and three Newfoundland appointees. The six commissioners voted on government measures and the governor signed them into law. The British government could not initiate legislation in Newfoundland, but the Commission needed permission from the Dominions Office for any of its major policies.

The Commission governed Newfoundland for 15 years, from 1934 until Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada in 1949. During that period, it initiated a number of reforms in order to balance the budget, decrease unemployment, and improve the health and well-being of Newfoundlanders. Although it did make some reforms within the fishery, the Commission's ability to carry out economic initiatives during the 1930s was limited because the world was still in the grips of the Great Depression and the colony's resource industries depended on global markets. As well the government

*The British commissioners were appointed to the senior departments that had the greatest relevance to reviving the economy and balancing the budget.

was restricted in its spending by the British Treasury. Thus, the Commission devoted most of its energies to social reforms, especially in the areas of education, public health, welfare, and law enforcement.

As with its economic reforms, the Commission's social reforms were hampered by a chronic lack of funds until the Second World War improved Newfoundland and Labrador's economy. Assessments of the Commission's achievements vary. As historian Peter Neary notes: "Like much else in history, the Commission of Government is perhaps best known by what its enemies and heirs, often one and the same, have had to say about it. Those who first governed Newfoundland after Confederation had a vested interest in spreading the notion that 1949 was the Year One, and that all good things began with their accession to power."

5.52 Bonavista Cold Storage, post-1939
Bonavista Cold Storage Company, opened in 1939, is the oldest surviving fish plant on the island.

5.53 Codfish on a trawler off the Grand Banks, 1949
Trawlers were another development in the fishery in the late 1940s.

Reforms in the Fishery

Part of the Commission of Government's larger plan for the rehabilitation of Newfoundland and Labrador was "a scheme for the reorganization of the fishery." Although the Amulree Report had suggested the truck system was the cause of many of the problems with the fisheries, it had offered no suggestions on how to abolish it. Instead, the report called for greater government intervention in the fishery. Its recommendations included having the government establish schooner bases and bait depots at strategic points, such as Bay Bulls and Bay of Islands, and studying ways to establish a local canning industry that could market cod fillets, cod tongues, smoked haddock, lobsters, capelin, salmon, and other local fish products.

Based on this, the Commission of Government looked for ways to increase centralization and efficiency in the fishery. In 1936 it established the Newfoundland Fisheries Board, which set the framework for future government involvement in the industry. The Board had three main functions: 1) to reform the saltfish marketing system; 2) to regulate and enforce fisheries laws; and 3) to oversee scientific research. It also established bait freezing plants around the country and a bait service in which a motorized vessel, the *Malakoff*, delivered frozen bait to fishers for the hook-and-line fishery.

During the Second World War, the Commission of Government saw another opportunity for the fishery with the arrival of quick-freezing technology that created a demand for frozen fish, especially in the United States. To enable Newfoundland to participate in this market, the government provided loans for the construction and operation of frozen-fish plants across the island. By 1946, there were 14 such plants in operation. Companies that operated these plants also began to use offshore trawlers after the war; in the coming years, these powerful vessels increasingly replaced schooners on the banks.

5.54 A group of school and pre-school children at Haystack, 1942

5.55 A group of children in Conche, c. 1940s

5.56 A Methodist school in the Gulch, c. 1940
Dozens of schools closed in Newfoundland and Labrador during the Great Depression. Those that remained open were in a general state of disrepair, prompting the Commission of Government to build new schools and improve existing ones. However, these efforts were hampered by a limited budget.

Education Reforms

The education system was already in very poor condition when the Commission of Government took over in 1934. Teachers were underpaid and poorly trained, the school curriculum was out of date, schools were dilapidated and lacked basic supplies, and school enrolment was low. In 1935, the Commission of Government initiated a series of reforms* designed to address these issues, including: 1) improving the quality of instruction; 2) improving the quality of the curriculum; 3) improving school facilities; and 4) increasing school attendance.

Educational reconstruction during the Commission of Government period was slow, however, due to limited financial resources, the need to increase teacher's salaries before other reforms, and the poor condition of educational facilities which the government inherited in 1934.

*The government also hoped to replace the denominational school system with a secular system, but opposition from the churches prevented such reform.

Improvements in Instruction:

- Returned teachers' salaries to their pre-Depression level. (Teachers were paid reduced salaries during the Depression because of the Newfoundland government's financial difficulties.)
- Encouraged teacher training by reopening the teachers' school at Memorial University College and establishing a summer school program.

Improvements in Curriculum:

- Revised curriculum to place emphasis on understanding rather than memorization.
- Reorganized curriculum to address more practical concerns by including health education, social education, and industrial training. It was thought this kind of curriculum would better serve a population whose employment would likely be in the fishery or other primary resource industry.

Improvements in Facilities:

- Initiated a construction program to build new schools and improve existing ones. By 1949, the government had built 555 new schools and renovated 264 others. However, many of these buildings still did not have electricity or running water; more than half were one-room schools; and most did not have libraries, laboratories, gymnasiums, or other facilities.
- Established Book Bureaus to provide students with free books and other school supplies. Prior to 1935, half of all schools lacked basic school equipment and 85 per cent did not even have a single book on their shelves.

Improvements in Attendance:

- Passed a School Attendance Act in 1942. This provided free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of seven and 14, as long as they were within a reasonable distance of a school. Prior to this Act, many children did not regularly attend school because they either lived too far away, worked in the fishery or found other employment to help supplement the family income, and/or their families could not afford to pay school fees. (Although fees were not compulsory, many parents were too embarrassed to send their children to class without paying.) Many poorer families also kept children home because they could not buy suitable clothing or footwear, particularly for winter conditions.

*In 1933, the average salary of a teacher was $331 yearly, which was comparatively low. (For instance, during the same period, the average salary for a teacher in Nova Scotia was $741.) By 1945, the Commission of Government had raised the average teacher salary to $992.

In 1933, a British school inspector reported some children in Newfoundland and Labrador schools had nothing to write on except brown paper bags.

The 1935 Census indicated that 25 per cent of Newfoundland children between the ages of six and fourteen did not attend school regularly.

5.58 Patients on the women's ward, Bonavista Cottage Hospital, c. 1947
The Bonavista Cottage Hospital opened in July 1940. A typical cottage hospital employed one or two physicians, a small staff of nurses, and had a bed capacity of between 10 and 30.

5.59 An operating room (possibly in the Military Hospital in St. John's), c. 1942
Following the Second World War, American and Canadian Armed Forces turned many of their military hospitals in Newfoundland and Labrador over to the Commission of Government for civilian use.

Public Health Reforms

The poverty that came with the Depression compromised the health of many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Without enough money to heat their homes or buy enough food to maintain a healthy diet, many people had become susceptible to nutritional diseases like beriberi and contagious diseases like pneumonia and tuberculosis. At the same time, there were not enough doctors, nurses, or hospital facilities to treat the population. The Commission of Government took several measures to address this situation. In fact, some of its most progressive policies were in the area of public health. These included initiatives to increase medical personnel and medical facilities, particularly in rural areas; improve the detection and treatment of tuberculosis; advance child health; and promote dietary reform.

Initiatives Related to Medical Personnel and Facilities

- Increased the number of doctors and nurses within the country. The public health division of the Department of Public Health and Welfare appointed two permanent medical officers to provide curative and preventive medicine and oversee a nursing staff in St. John's. In rural areas, the government hired doctors as full-time employees. It also took over the nursing services of Newfoundland Outport Nursing and Industrial Association (NONIA),* hired nurses to fill vacancies, and opened centres that had not previously been served by a doctor or a nurse.
- Improved Medical Training. The government supported specialized training for medical personnel by encouraging medical and nursing leaders to attend North American conferences on health care and securing financial support through the Rockefeller Foundation to send nurses to advanced nursing courses in Canada and the United States.
- Increased health care facilities for people in rural areas. The Commission of Government increased the number of nursing stations in rural areas and established several cottage hospitals. By 1942 the government had established 13 **cottage hospitals** across the island, in such communities as Markland, Argentia, and Bonne Bay. In 1935, the government also created a 'floating hospital' – the MV *Lady Anderson* – in order to reach the more isolated communities on the south coast of the island between Fortune Bay and Port aux Basques. The medical staff on board treated the sick, provided immunizations against contagious diseases, and conducted public health work.

Initiatives to Fight Tuberculosis:

- Expanded the tuberculosis sanatorium in St. John's and built a sanatorium in Corner Brook.
- Established the Avalon Health Unit as a means to increase detection of the disease. The Avalon Health Unit was based in Harbour Grace but travelled throughout the Avalon Peninsula, taking X-rays of the population and isolating diagnosed cases.
- Launched the *Christmas Seal*, a ship with medical facilities, to increase detection of tuberculosis and establish preventive measures against the disease.

Improvements in Child Health:

- Initiated a school health program. To improve school children's diets, the government distributed milk, coco-malt, cod liver oil, and whole-meal buns in schools. The school health program also provided immunizations against diphtheria, typhoid, and smallpox, and public health initiatives. These included providing teachers with health manuals and establishing the Junior Red Cross to instruct children in first aid, the prevention of accidents, and good health in general.
- Created a Child Welfare Clinic in St. John's.
- Established a Child Welfare Division within the Department of Public Health and Welfare and passed important child welfare legislation. This included the Adoption Act of 1940, which formalized the adoption process, and the Welfare of Children Act** of 1944.

Dietary Reform:

- Improved the nutritional value of dole rations. To enhance the traditional Newfoundland diet of saltfish, salt beef, white flour, tea, and molasses on which many families lived, the government included vitamin-rich brown flour in its dole rations by the end of 1934. However, malnutrition rates remained high throughout the period, and there was significant public backlash about the "dole flour."

In addition to providing affordable medical services to the public, hospital employees offered public health education and midwifery training.

*Communities still had to contribute 75 per cent of the nurse's salary.

**The Welfare of Children Act allowed for the Division of Child Welfare to assist single mothers and care for abused, neglected, and homeless children.

5.61 The Commission of Government hoped that agricultural development might provide alternative employment for Newfoundlanders.
The Commission established a demonstration farm and agricultural school near St. John's in the mid-1930s to help educate future farmers.

The Daily News

JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND, SATURDAY, JULY 1

No Dole For Men Refusing Opportunities To Work

Receipts Higher and Expenditure Lower In June Than Previously Estimated — Companies Will Have to Furnish Audited Balance Sheets—Bounty on Shipbuilding May Be Discontinued

(Press Communique)

The thirty-third meeting of Commission of Government was held in the Colonial Building on Friday, July 13th, at 10.15 a.m.

His Excellency the Governor presided.

The following Commissioners were present:

The Honourable Commissioner for Natural Resources.

The Honourable Commissioner for

authority to the Courts concerned to fix the instalments by which decreed debts must be paid, in cases in which it is impossible for the Judgment Debtor to pay the whole amount at once.

(b) An Act to Amend Chapter 83 of the Consolidated Statutes of Newfoundland (Third Series) entitled "The Judicature Act". This is a corollary to the foregoing Act, and provides that Magistrates shall have jurisdiction to deal with cases involving liquidated amounts to the extent of $200, thus avoiding the infliction of unnecessary expense upon debtors through what at present is really an abuse of the process of the Supreme Court. If the Plaintiff can satisfy

5.62 From *The Daily News*, July 13, 1934

"However low the scale may appear in English eyes, it is too near the average standard of existence in Newfoundland, for the Government to make idleness more attractive than work."

– 1936 comment from Government House in St. John's to the Dominion Office on why the dole rations should not be increased

Welfare Measures

The Commission of Government's welfare division and programs were influenced by the Amulree Report's analysis of what needed to be done to improve the living conditions of people in Newfoundland. However, the Amulree Report had underestimated the colony's complex economic weaknesses and overestimated the ability of Newfoundlanders to subsidize their incomes – particularly through agriculture. Using this interpretation of the situation, the Commission's welfare division assumed that people were poor because they lacked the initiative to work. As a result, the welfare division focused many of its efforts on ensuring its welfare measures were not abused by the poor, rather than on increasing its spending on welfare measures that would actually help people improve their living conditions. The welfare measures that were managed by the Commission consisted largely of public works initiatives and income transfers.

Public Works Initiatives:

- Established make-work projects for the unemployed. These had limited success, especially in the outports, as construction projects such as road building occurred during the spring and summer months when the labour force was already engaged in the fisheries or in other primary resource occupations.
- Encouraged agricultural development. The Commission of Government hoped that agricultural development would reduce people's dependence on public relief. As had been suggested in the Amulree Report, it offered cash bonuses for land clearing and cultivation, established a Demonstration Farm and Agricultural School near St. John's to train future farmers, and distributed livestock to promote animal husbandry. The Commission also initiated the Land Settlement Program*, which attempted to establish several new agriculture-based communities. (For more on these communities, see page 436).

Income Transfers:

- Provided indirect income transfers. Indirect income transfer was mostly tariff adjustments. For instance, the government lowered its duties on food (especially wholemeal flour and fresh fruit) and clothing, so that these essentials would be more affordable for people. It also permitted equipment for fishers, farmers, and loggers to enter the country duty-free.
- Provided direct income transfers. These included old-age pensions, able-bodied relief (the dole), and allowances for the "Permanent Poor" – widows, orphans, the aged, the sick, and the disabled. In many ways, these relief measures were more conservative than the programs of previous governments. There was no increase in the amounts that people received, and the Commission increased the supervision of these programs.** According to historian Terry Bishop-Stirling, "the benefits they [the Commission of Government] offered were far from generous; they cannot even be considered subsistence allowances."

*Similar land settlement programs had been initiated throughout Canada, the United States, Europe, and Britain in order to relieve the high unemployment caused by the Great Depression.

**People had to apply for benefits and prove that they were in need; then the government examined each applicant individually and decided whether or not he or she deserved assistance.

THE DOLE UNDER THE COMMISSION OF GOVERNMENT

Able-bodied relief, or the dole, was the most common form of government assistance during the Great Depression. Through this program, the government provided vouchers with which people could purchase food and other necessities from a specified list. Relief allowances depended on the size of a family, but the average allowance was small because officials felt that if allowances were satisfactory it would be difficult to get people off the dole. The government wanted public relief to be an unpleasant experience that people would struggle to avoid. Historians have argued that this reflected the government's interest in disciplining or punishing the needy for not being able to support themselves.

5.63 Scale of relief allowances, 1935

Number of Persons in Family	Cost of Monthly Food Order
1	$2.00
2	$4.00
3	$5.85
4	$7.70
5	$9.50
6	$11.20
7	$13.00
8	$14.75
9	$16.00
10	$17.50

CASE STUDY

The Commission of Government's Land Settlement Program

5.64 Brown's Arm, 1939

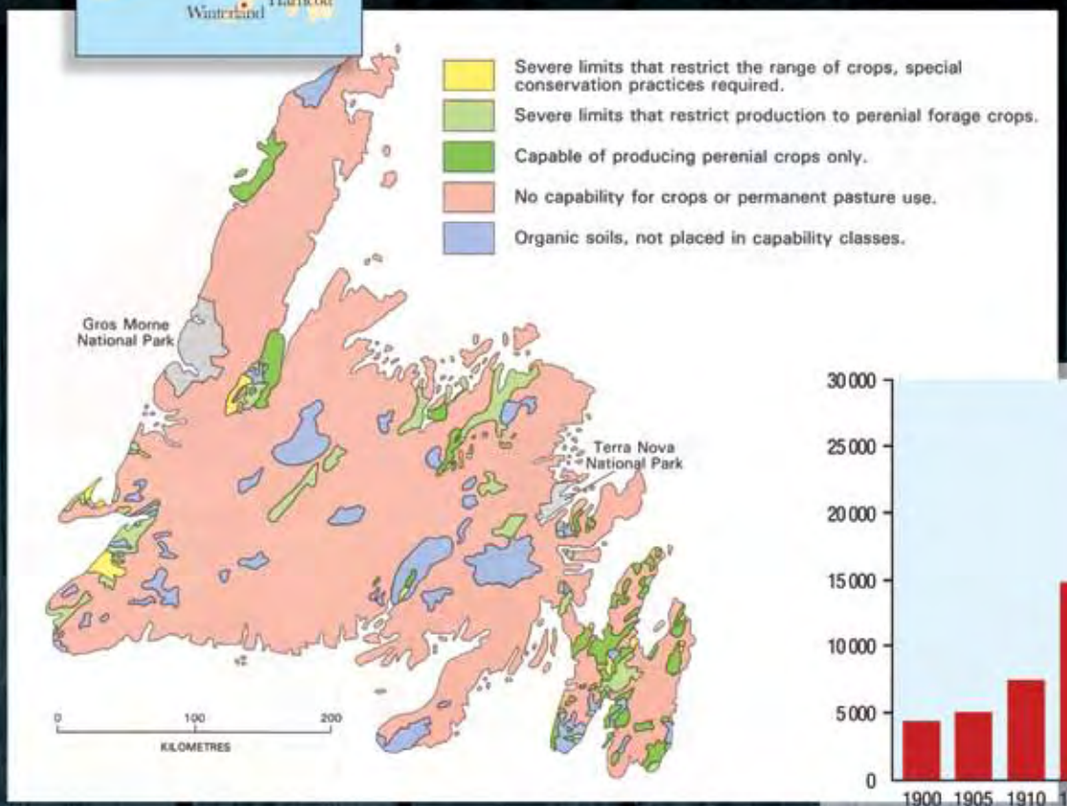
5.65 Farmer with horse-drawn plough, Harricott

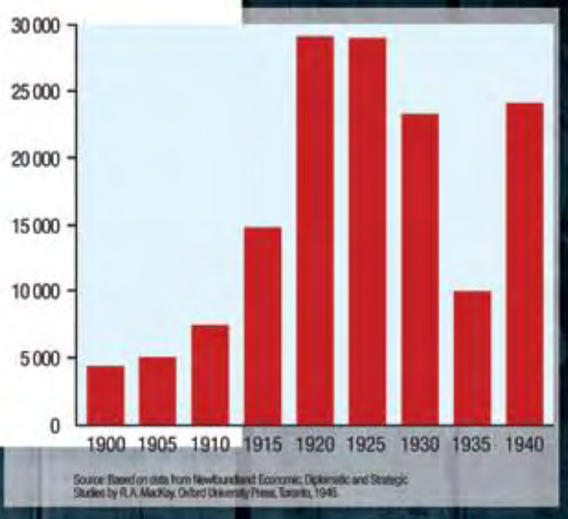
As part of its overall efforts to diversify the economy and to deal with the problems of high unemployment, the Commission of Government established a Land Settlement Program in 1934.

UNDER THIS PROGRAM, THE GOVERNMENT HELPED FAMILIES establish farms, raise livestock, and build rural communities. The Commission loaned successful applicants two years-worth of relief money to start the project, with the hopes that all families would become self-sufficient and be able to pay back the loan. Since the government intended this program to provide work for the unemployed, it only accepted applications from families on able-bodied relief who had at least one adult male capable of performing physical labour.

5.66 Communities created by the Land Settlement Program

5.67 Soil capabilities for agriculture





5.68 Agricultural export values (five-year averages in dollars)
(right) Farming did not evolve to become a significant part of the economy under the Commission of Government. For instance, the number of farmers recorded in 1935 was only 5.5 per cent of the total work force. Likewise, agricultural exports were fairly insignificant. In 1935, agricultural exports were worth less than $10 000, while forestry exports were worth over $14 million.

The government also provided families with a cottage, furniture, supplies, and clothing. In return, residents cultivated the land and worked together on community projects. The program emphasized cooperation and also attempted to dissolve denominational ties by establishing non-denominational schools. In the beginning, and especially in the cases of Markland and Harricott, it was also a social experiment in which the Commission of Government attempted to reform the character of rural Newfoundlanders.

In total, the Commission relocated 365 families and created eight communities: Markland, Harricott, Lourdes, Brown's Arm, Midland, Sandringham, Winterland, and Point au Mal. Although Sandringham and Winterland both prospered as farming communities (and are still vibrant communities today), the program failed as a rural development policy overall. It lacked adequate planning, was poorly administered, and was plagued by social tensions and financial difficulties. Many of the farmers involved in these programs eventually took wage-paying jobs on military bases during the Second World War or in forestry-related operations at Corner Brook and Grand Falls. By the late 1930s, the cost of maintaining the settlements had become too high and the government abandoned the scheme.

Questions:

1. Why was the Land Settlement Program established? How were applicants selected?
2. What were the perceived benefits of the Land Settlement Program?
3. In 2007, agriculture accounted for 0.6 per cent of the total Newfoundland and Labrador employment by industry. What factors might explain why this is the case?

5.69 Newfoundland Ranger, Constable Danny Corcoran, 1935
This constable gave his life in the line of duty. While posted at White Bay, he became lost in the wilderness for 17 days and was badly frostbitten. He died just over a week after he was found.

5.70 Rangers were often the only liaison between a community and their central government.
This was especially true for many of the isolated communities in Labrador. Here a Newfoundland Ranger poses with some people from North West River, c. 1940s.

Law Enforcement

The Commission of Government realized that law enforcement in the mid-1930s was sparse and inadequate. The colony's only police force, the Newfoundland Constabulary, consisted of approximately 170 officers, half of which served on the Avalon Peninsula. To improve this situation, the Commission of Government reorganized law enforcement in Newfoundland and Labrador. First, it changed the Newfoundland Constabulary into an urban police force and restricted it to more heavily populated areas – St. John's, the Avalon Peninsula, Corner Brook, and Grand Falls. Then in 1935, it created the Newfoundland Ranger Force* (NRF) to provide policing and government services to the outports. The Rangers replaced most of the Newfoundland Constabulary officers who had been stationed there, and for 15 years they provided a vital link between people living in rural communities and the central government in St. John's.

Although Rangers were told that their primary duty was to patrol and police the districts, police work was actually only a small part of their responsibilities. In reality, the Rangers functioned as an administrative extension of the central government. During the first five years of

"... the Newfoundland Rangers are a sort of super-police force which does a great deal of useful administrative and protective work in remote parts of the country."

– St. John's *The Evening Telegram*, July 15, 1939

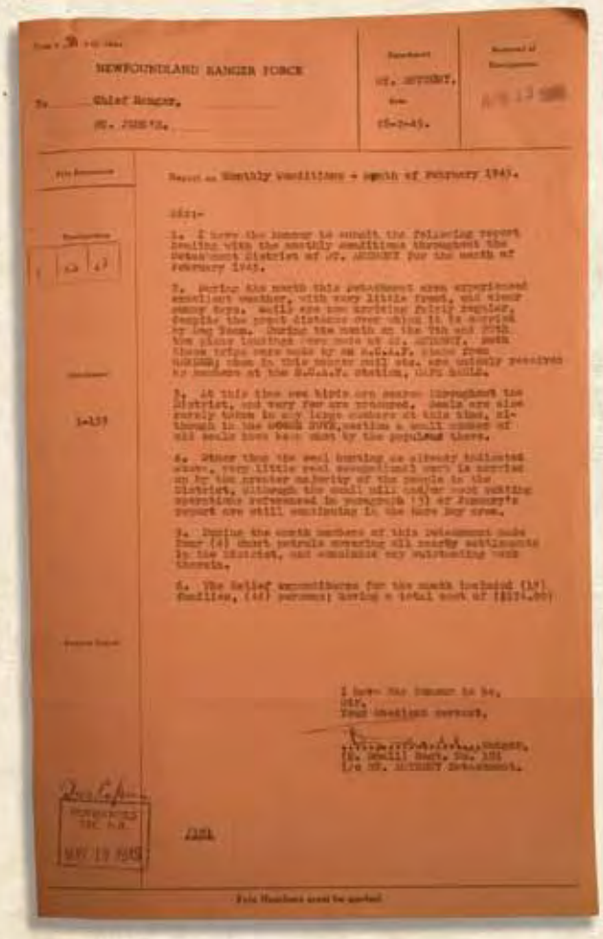
*The Force was modeled upon the Royal Canadian Mounted Police which provided policing services throughout northern Canada.

*Technically the Rangers worked directly under the Department of Natural Resources, but they performed a wide variety of duties for all government departments.

the Commission of Government (1934-39), the Rangers spent most of their time doing tasks such as investigating relief applicants, distributing relief, and supervising relief projects – duties associated with the Department of Public Health and Welfare.* In 1937, the Rangers also were given the duties of District Officers, which further increased their administrative function.

The Rangers patrolled their districts every month and submitted four kinds of reports to the government based on the information they gathered: 1) Crime 2) Patrol 3) General Conditions, and 4) Miscellaneous. These reports detailed all activities in the communities. They noted the social and economic conditions in each settlement, including the number of people on public relief, the amount of money spent on relief, and the condition of the population in general. They provided information about the fisheries and stated other areas where men were finding employment. These reports provided the Commission with essential information on all activities in rural areas.

The Ranger's duties sometimes increased according to changes in government policy and global events. During the Second World War, the Rangers became responsible for: enforcing rations and black-out orders; patrolling for enemy submarines and aircraft; arresting military deserters; issuing national registration cards; and recruiting volunteers for the Armed Forces. After the war, the Rangers surveyed their districts about the popularity of the Commission of Government in the outports. They also gathered information on people's attitudes towards the return of responsible government and confederation with Canada. After Confederation, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) gradually assumed the roles of the Rangers in the outports and the Newfoundland Ranger force was disbanded in 1950.



NEWFOUNDLAND RANGER FORCE

5.71 A Newfoundland Ranger report from the St. Anthony detachment, February 1945

5.72 Duties of the Newfoundland Rangers

Department	Duties of Ranger
Natural Resources	• Inspect logging camps and conditions • Enforce game laws • Issue small game and sport-fishing licences • Enforce salmon, herring, and lobster regulations • Organize forest fire fighting
Public Health and Welfare	• Issue public relief payments • Arrange for medical treatment of patients • Escort mental health patients to St. John's
Justice	• Enforce criminal law and all statutes of Newfoundland • Investigate accidental/sudden deaths • Investigate fires • Escort prisoners • Act as deputy sheriffs in designated areas
Finance	• Collect customs duties and licence fees • Inspect weights and measures
Home Affairs and Education	• Act as truant officers • Inspect schools
Public Utilities	• Supervise construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, wharves, government buildings, and breakwaters • Issue driver's licences • Act as wreck commissioners

Questions:

1. In which areas did the Commission of Government initiate reforms? Create a chart in which you give the five areas, and list the main reforms the Commission of Government hoped to initiate.
2. In which of these areas was the government most successful? Explain.
3. Overall, how effective was the Commission of Government in governing Newfoundland and improving the lives of Newfoundlanders? Explain.

TOPIC 5.6

Second World War

During the Second World War, American culture was shared with Newfoundland and Labrador through radio and recreation events. How is culture shared between countries today?

Many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians serve in the armed forces today. What are the main roles carried out by the armed forces?

THE DAILY NEWS

ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1939 — Price: Two Cents — No. 199

Britain, France Declare War On Germany

PATRIOTIC MEN and WOMEN

You are asked to show your loyalty to King and Country by taking part in to-day's Patriotic Labor Parade.

Ribbons for sale by members of the Committee.

Hitler Failed Reply British Ultimatum

London Hears Announcement Of War With Complete Calm

5.73 ***The Daily News*****, Sept. 4, 1939**

Introduction

Britain's declaration of war against Germany on September 3, 1939 automatically drew Newfoundland and Labrador into the hostilities. Although many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians were eager to enlist for military service, Newfoundland did not have its own armed forces in 1939. Both the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and the Royal Naval Reserve had disbanded by the early 1920s, and the colony's struggling economy had prevented it from establishing another military force. Unable to bear the enormous expense of raising and equipping an overseas force, the Commission of Government encouraged volunteers from Newfoundland and from Labrador to join British, Canadian, and other Allied Armed Forces.

Contributions

During the course of the war, approximately 22 000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians served overseas. Thousands more offered, but failed to meet eligibility requirements. This was a significant contribution from a small British colony with a population of only 300 000. These volunteers from Newfoundland and Labrador served on land, at sea, and in the air. They fought in Britain, Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, North Africa, and other parts of the world. The Royal Navy attracted more volunteers than any other single branch of the armed forces, but significant numbers also joined Britain's Royal Artillery and Royal Air Force. Many joined other allied forces – especially the Canadian units, which recruited 1160 men from Newfoundland and Labrador.

5.74 John Parsons, Royal Navy, c. 1940s
During the Second World War, many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, such as John Parsons of Greenspond, enlisted in the Royal Navy. Based on their performance, Winston Churchill called Newfoundlanders "the hardiest and most skillful boatmen in rough seas who exist."

5.75 RCAF-WD recruits in St. John's, Sept. 24, 1942
More than 500 Newfoundland and Labrador women joined the Canadian Armed Forces, serving in the Royal Canadian Air Force's Women's Division (RCAF-WD), the Canadian Women's Auxiliary Air Force, the Canadian Women's Army Corps, and the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service. Women who enlisted helped to close the gap in gender inequality, but also faced considerable discrimination. They earned lower wages than their male counterparts, could not receive allowances for dependent husbands, and had to work in non-combatant roles away from the front lines.

5.76 Newfoundland and Labrador enlistees, c. 1940
Joseph Kearney (left) and John Pike, two soldiers from Newfoundland and Labrador who joined the Royal Artillery during the Second World War.

Other Newfoundlanders and Labradorians contributed to the war effort in non-combat roles. About 10 000 residents, for example, served in the Merchant Marine, crewing vessels carrying food, equipment, and personnel across the North Atlantic to Britain and other allies. It was dangerous work – German **U-boats** sank an average of 33 Allied merchant vessels each week during the peak of hostilities. The Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit (NOFU) also sent about 3600 loggers to the United Kingdom. These men helped to satisfy Britain's wartime demand for timber products.

Back in Newfoundland and Labrador, some residents joined the home defence force created by the Commission of Government. Originally known as the Newfoundland Militia, it became the Newfoundland Regiment in 1943. Others contributed to the war effort through charitable organizations such as the Women's Patriotic Association (WPA), the Newfoundland Patriotic Association (NPA), and the Red Cross. Individuals also sent clothes, food, and other material comforts to soldiers serving overseas. Still others provided medical care to injured troops, visited bereaved family members, or raised money to support the war effort in general.

5.77 An ad for war bonds from *The Daily News*, June 22, 1940

5.78 Newfoundland and Labrador as a "stepping stone to North America"

Foreign Military Bases in Newfoundland and Labrador

During the Second World War Canadian and American armed forces built and staffed military bases throughout the colony. This was important because of Newfoundland and Labrador's strategic location. Known as a "stepping stone to North America," the island was closer to Europe than any other part of North America. An occupation by German forces would give easy access to both Canada and the United States; thus its security was critical to the defence of North America. Yet the colony did not have any military bases to repel an enemy attack at the start of hostilities, nor could it afford to build any.

Canada decided in September 1939 to take over the defence of Newfoundland and Labrador. It spent approximately $65 million in the coming years to establish air bases at Torbay and Goose Bay, expand existing airports at Gander and Botwood, build a naval base at St. John's, and open a ship repair facility at nearby Bay Bulls. It sent tens of thousands of troops to Newfoundland and Labrador – from 1943 to 1945, for example, as many as 16 000 Canadian servicemen and women were stationed in the colony at any one time.

"… the integrity of Newfoundland and Labrador is essential to the security of Canada."

– Prime Minister Mackenzie King, Sept. 8, 1939

5.79 A heavy bomber hangar under construction, Goose Bay, 1953
The construction and ongoing maintenance of the base at Goose Bay provided many with a source of cash employment.

All bases played important roles during the war. Fighter squadrons and bombers based at Torbay and Botwood patrolled the North Atlantic searching for U-boats. Goose Bay and Gander became vital refuelling stations for aircraft leaving America for Britain, and also aided in coastal defence. The Canadian naval base at St. John's was home to military escort vessels that protected convoy lanes.

5.80 Second World War vessels J334 and J317 in St. John's Harbour, c. 1942

5.81 Airman and infantrymen at RCAF Station, Gander, 1943
In the background is a Hawker Hurricane XII aircraft.

MILITARIZING THE WILDERNESS

Of all the foreign bases built in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Goose Bay airfield probably had the largest impact on the people and environment around it. Unpopulated wilderness at the start of the war, Goose Bay became the largest airfield in the Western Hemisphere in 1943 – able to accommodate 3000 civilian workers and 5000 military personnel.

The construction of the base attracted hundreds of Labradorians who were looking for work. Although a source of much-needed employment, the base also eroded local lifestyles. For many, year-round salaried work replaced traditional season-based activities, such as trapping in the winter and fishing in the summer. In addition, as Labradorians came into contact with Canadian and American servicemen, they were exposed to North American culture. In some cases, this influenced such things as residents' recreational choices and diet. Many children, for example, began to ask for canned spaghetti, macaroni and cheese, and other North American processed foods instead of game meat and other traditional foods.

5.82 American music, food, and other goods became more common here with the establishment of the American military bases.

5.83 United States Army installation atop Signal Hill, St. John's, c. 1941-1945
The American encampment on Signal Hill consisted of heavy cannons to repel naval assaults and large guns for use against enemy aircraft.

5.84 American base Fort Pepperrell, St. John's, c. 1942-1945

The United States also built military bases and stationed troops in the colony. It signed a Leased Bases Agreement with Britain on March 27, 1941, giving it permission to build bases in eight British colonies, including Newfoundland and Labrador. Under the agreement, America leased these areas for a period of 99 years. In return, the United States gave Britain 50 of its naval destroyers. During the next four years, the United States spent more than $100 million to build an army base at St. John's (known as Fort Pepperrell), an air base at Stephenville (known as Harmon Field), a naval air station at Argentia, and an army base in the neighbouring village of Marquise (known as Fort McAndrew). It also built a series of radar sites, radio transmitters, repeater stations, and other small installations across the country. By the end of the war, more than 100 000 American troops had served in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The establishment of foreign military bases and influx of tens of thousands of North American troops triggered a series of rapid economic, social, and political changes in Newfoundland and Labrador. Some were positive; some were negative. Many would have far-reaching implications for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Economic Impacts

The war brought a sudden injection of economic prosperity to the colony. The combined spending of $165 million by Canada and the United States to build military bases sparked a construction boom that employed thousands of local residents in both Newfoundland and Labrador. By the end of 1942, approximately 20 000 men and women were working at the bases. More than 7000 others were earning salaries as military enlistees. In a colony where the credit (or truck) system had operated for centuries, the war allowed many people to earn cash wages for the first time in their lives. The poverty so widespread before the war was greatly reduced.

Local businesses and industries prospered greatly from the war. Building suppliers, construction companies, and a host of tradesmen and labourers were involved in constructing bases, roads and railways, and port facilities. American and Canadian troops spent heavily at local restaurants and stores. Dairy farmers also experienced increased demand for milk and other products. The colony's lumber companies sold significant volumes of timber to base contractors, and wartime demand for fish drove up the price of cod on the international market.

Wartime prosperity caused government revenue to increase dramatically. After reporting a series of deficits in the 1930s – including two $4-million deficits in the 1938-39 and 1939-40 fiscal years – the country enjoyed a series of surpluses totaling a combined $28 million by the end of the 1945-1946 fiscal year. With so much money in the public purse, the Commission of Government increased spending on education, health care, transportation, housing, and other social services.

Not all changes, however, were positive. Mining and pulp and paper companies experienced temporary labour shortages as workers left to accept higher paying jobs at the bases. To help remedy this, the Commission of Government asked the Americans and Canadians to keep pay rates low for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Government officials also feared that if local workers earned extremely high wages during the war, they would expect the same wages when the war was over – which local industries would likely not be able to afford.

Wartime also drove up the cost of many foodstuffs and goods, increasing the cost of living in Newfoundland and Labrador by about 58 per cent. The price of a dozen eggs, for example, almost tripled from 50 cents to $1.37. Although high employment rates and increased wages tended to offset difficulties caused by inflation, residents on fixed incomes, such as the wives of recruits serving overseas, found it difficult to afford the rising cost of living.

5.85 Construction workers, c. 1941
Workers help construct a dock at the American air naval base in Argentia. About 4000 labourers from Newfoundland and Labrador were employed on the base at any one time during construction.

5.86

5.87

Excerpts from *Paradise Cafe*

Paradise Cafe was written by a group of students from Robert Leckie Intermediate School in Happy Valley-Goose Bay in 1990. It is based on the changes that occurred in the community over time with the construction of the Goose Bay Air Base in the 1940s, the pullout of the American operations in the 1970s, and beyond.

Gladys: Jim, if we don't build on promises and hopes then what can we ever build on?

(The Paradise Cafe sign shines on the drawn stage curtains. The Real Estate Man enters with a free-standing tripod, a "For sale" sign and hammer and nails. He sets the tripod down and begins to nail the sign up. Gladys enters to watch.)

Gladys: This place has such memories. It's a shame we have to part with it. I was here the day it opened … I can't believe I'm here now, selling it … if it could talk, what stories it would tell…

Gladys: Yeah, Clarice married a serviceman too, but she went back to the States with hers. Me and Jim, we stayed here. He likes it here. I went on working at the cafe for the first few years, while Jim was still in the Air Force. Then when he got out, we collected our pennies and put them together for a small down payment on the little place. It was hard work to make a go of it…

Gladys: But the 70's now, they brought a different kind of problem… At first, times seemed promising enough. The military weren't building so much anymore, but they were employing a lot of people. And there was a feeling of growth … Little Happy Valley was not just a construction camp built up around the base. It was beginning to be a real little community, in its own right. It has schools, churches, and its own hospital, a small library…

Those were the Linerboard Days. Oh, yes, Joey had big plans for us.

(Lights come up on the cafe. Gladys is seated at a table, sketching renovations. Jim carries in a step ladder and begins to work.)

Jim: Before you get too carried away with your renovations now, what're you gonna do if the military really do pull out, like some people say they will? And what if the government doesn't come through with the bucks for the Linerboard operation? What're you gonna do if you got the window out and one wall torn up and the Labrador winter whistlin' through? Maybe you shouldn't build on promises and hopes…

Gladys: Jim, if we don't build on promises and hopes, then what are we ever going to build on?

(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.)

Jim: *(voice over, on tape)* The American Air Force announced today that it will be pulling out of its Goose Bay operations in June of this year. The news is no surprise, as it had been rumoured for some time … (Volume fades in and out) Premier Frank Moores announced today that the Labrador Linerboard will close down its operation on …

(As the Audio announcement fades, Jim nails a board diagonally across the window he was fixing …)

5.88 Workmen at Goose Bay

Experiencing The Arts

Now you are ready to write your scene. Remember to include any necessary stage directions for your "performers", as well as suggestions for props, backdrops, etc.

5.89 Knights of Columbus Hostel fire, St. John's, Dec. 12, 1942

5.90 Interior view of the Knights of Columbus Hostel, St. John's, c. 1940-42
Until it was destroyed by fire in 1942, the Knights of Columbus Hostel in St. John's was a popular recreation facility for service personnel during the Second World War.

5.91 Enlistment and deaths of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in the Second World War

Branches	Number Enlisted	Fatalities
Merchant Marine	5000	266
Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit	3596	34
British Royal Navy	3419	352
British Army	2343	83
Canadian Forces	1684	120
Royal Newfoundland Regiment	1668	30
British Royal Air Force	713	139
Other Forces (e.g., American Army)	unknown	4

Social Impacts

Newfoundland and Labrador society experienced both direct and indirect consequences of the Second World War. Many families were directly impacted by the loss of family members who died while fighting overseas. Over 1000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians lost their lives as enlisted personnel during the Second War World. Others were killed on home soil by direct acts of war. These include those who were among the 136 lost when a German U-boat sank the SS *Caribou*, the Sydney to Port aux Basques passenger ferry, on October 14, 1942 and the more than 60 men who were killed when German U-boats attacked Bell Island twice in 1942, sinking four ore carriers.

The Second World War had a major cultural impact on Newfoundland and Labrador society. Local residents came into contact with thousands of Canadian and American troops and were thus more directly exposed to North American entertainment and consumer goods. American radio played on local airwaves, styles of dress changed, and standards of living generally improved. Civilians and military personnel mixed at dances, sporting events,* movie nights, and other social events. Relationships with local residents were generally good. A considerable number of American servicemen married Newfoundland women. These interactions and exchanges helped integrate the local society into the larger North American culture.

Foreign military bases also were the means by which the colony gained a significant amount of social capital. Both the Canadians and Americans invested millions of dollars in state-of-the-art hospitals, airports, roads, telecommunications systems, sewage systems, living quarters, and other infrastructure. When the bases closed, the local community inherited much of this at virtually no economic cost. Canada, for example, sold its 100-bed hospital at Botwood to the Commission of Government for just $1 in 1946. The building served as a cottage hospital until it closed in 1989. Many other facilities built during the Second World War are still in use today, including airports at Stephenville, Gander, Torbay (today the St. John's International Airport), and Goose Bay.

*Bell Island is one of the few locations in North America that German forces directly attacked during the Second World War.

*Local civilians and visiting troops competed against each other in hockey games, baseball games, boxing matches, and at the annual St. John's Regatta.

5.92 Airports established, used, or refurbished during the Second World War

5.93 *Posted to Newfie*, Paul Goranson (1942)
Military personnel were a common sight in Newfoundland and Labrador during the Second World War as depicted in this painting by Paul Goranson, a commissioned war artist for the Royal Canadian Air Force.

5.94 An unidentified soldier of the United States Army posing with a 40 mm Bofors Anti-Aircraft gun, Hill O' Chips, St. John's, c. 1941-45

Some frictions did emerge between residents and visiting military personnel. The Newfoundland government expropriated private properties needed by the forces. Government officials compensated all dislocated property owners with money, but many felt their payments did not cover the emotional and economic costs of moving. The daily presence of foreign military personnel also created some problems for residents and civil authorities. Some communities were overwhelmed with the vast numbers of enlisted men who were sometimes unruly and disorderly. However, military authorities challenged the rights of local authorities to arrest and prosecute enlisted men under civilian law. An increase in sexually transmitted diseases, drunkenness, brawling in public places, motor vehicle accidents, and the poaching of fish and wildlife represent some negative influences.

Nonetheless, the war period was generally a time of prosperity in Newfoundland and Labrador. Exposure to a more affluent and materialistic North American culture began to change expectations and values. Employment rates were high and many families became accustomed to a quality of living they could not afford just a few years earlier. Wartime prosperity produced social and economic changes which soon led to the demand for political change.

5.95 German submarine
This submarine is possibly the German U-boat (U-190) that was surrendered to Canadian corvettes off Cape Race, Newfoundland on May 11, 1945. It was escorted into Bay Bulls and later sailed into St. John's Harbour with the White Ensign of the Royal Navy flying.

Political Impacts

By 1945, Newfoundland was financially self-supporting. Employment was much higher than before the war, the government was reporting successive surpluses, and even made a series of interest-free loans to Great Britain. Many people believed the tremendous economic hardships of the pre-war years, which had culminated in the loss of responsible government, were past. As the colony's 1933 arrangement with Britain was that the Commission of Government would last until Newfoundland was once again self-supporting, a debate soon emerged over which form of government Newfoundland should adopt.

Many people supported a return to responsible government, but others feared this would again lead to economic ruin. They argued the colony's current prosperity would not last and believed that a union with Canada – and its stable economy – was a more sensible choice. The war had done much to strengthen Newfoundland's ties with Canada. After the war began, for example, growing numbers of workers regularly left the country for seasonal or temporary jobs in Canada. Trade between the country and Canada was also increasing. Immediately before the war, Newfoundland imported 37 per cent of its goods from Canada. This had jumped to 61 per cent by 1945.

Moreover, Canadian officials grew increasingly receptive to confederation during the war, as it became apparent that Newfoundland and Labrador was of significant economic and strategic value to Canada. Some Canadian officials even feared the country would join the United States and become "another Alaska" on its east coast. By helping to integrate Newfoundland and Labrador into North American society and economy, the Second World War also helped to bring about one of the most profound and far-reaching political changes in the colony's history – union with Canada.

Questions:

1. How did exposure to North American culture during the war impact Newfoundland and Labrador lifestyles?

2. What armed forces and other organizations did volunteers from Newfoundland and Labrador join during the Second World War? Why might so many men have joined the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy, and other mercantile marines?

3. The forerunner of what is now St. John's International Airport was built by the Canadian military during the Second World War. What other buildings built during the war are still in use today? How have their purposes changed since the war?

4. Why did American and Canadian military forces decide to build military bases in Newfoundland and Labrador during the Second World War?

5. How did the Second World War change the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador? How did it change Newfoundland and Labrador politics?

TOPIC 5.7

Aboriginal Lifestyles

Should Aboriginal languages be a mandatory part of the provincial curriculum?

Why is it important for traditional Aboriginal lifestyles to be maintained by younger generations?

5.96 An unidentified group of Inuit visiting a store in the Voisey's Bay area, pre-1960

5.97 Making do with whatever materials are available
This picture from the 1930s shows a woman standing next to a shed made from half a fishing skiff.

Introduction

The Great Depression and worldwide drop in fur prices in the 1930s affected all Aboriginal groups, as it did many other Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. A further challenge to living a traditional lifestyle was the reduction in traditional trapping and hunting grounds because of new forestry and other economic development – although these sometimes did offer alternative forms of employment. In particular, the building of the military base at Goose Bay drew many members from Labrador Aboriginal groups away from their traditional communities to a larger urban centre.

Inuit

When the Moravians sold their stores to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1926 because of financial difficulties, life for Inuit of Labrador changed. The Hudson's Bay Company was involved mainly in the fur trade. The company provided Inuit with the necessary food and ammunition to hunt, and encouraged Inuit to abandon or decrease many of their other activities, including sealing and fishing, in order to trade fur year-round for credit at company stores.

With the advent of the Great Depression in the 1930s, dependence on the fur trade and on Hudson's Bay Company stores for manufactured goods and imported foods undermined the Inuit subsistence economy and made them more vulnerable to outside forces over which they had no control. When the price of fur dropped during the Great Depression, many Inuit families fell into poverty. The company suggested a return to sealing rather than trapping furs, but nets used for sealing had been neglected, and the rawhide had rotted.

An additional problem was increased health issues among Inuit, arising from changes in diet and lifestyle. In 1932, the Hudson's Bay Company ended credit advances and conducted an entirely cash and barter business. The only way some Inuit could earn money to buy supplies was to sell wood to the Hudson's Bay Company store. By 1936, diseases such as scurvy and beriberi became more prevalent. There was also an increase in the number of tuberculosis cases. The only form of government assistance for Inuit was small relief payments that were distributed by the Newfoundland Ranger Force.

Eventually, lower worldwide prices for furs led the Hudson's Bay Company to withdraw from northern Labrador in the 1940s. Government then took over the posts and promoted a return to the diversified Inuit economy by accepting goods other than furs.

5.98 Inuit boys in Makkovik, c. 1930

However, other outside factors arose to influence the way of life for Inuit living in Labrador. The construction of the large military base at Goose Bay during the Second World War, and the construction of smaller radar bases along the coast, provided cash for some Inuit. This was the first time many Inuit were able to purchase goods using a cash system. This increase in construction led to some Inuit travelling to the Lake Melville area for work. Since they were not allowed to live close to the base, many began to set up their houses in Happy Valley.* As well, contact with other groups, especially the Canadian and American military personnel, introduced Inuit to a lifestyle that was very different from the traditional lifestyle to which they were accustomed.

*The two settlements of Happy Valley and Goose Bay were amalgamated into a single town, Happy Valley–Goose Bay, in 1974.

5.99 A different lifestyle
The construction of the Goose Bay military base in 1941 attracted many Inuit, Innu, and Metis workers to the area. This move meant several lifestyle changes for these workers and their families. (above) Locals wait to view a movie on the Canadian part of the base. (right) The Royal Canadian Air Force section of Goose Air Base, c. 1943.

TRADITIONAL INUIT LIFESTYLE

Inuit lifestyle continued in much the same way for hundreds of years. But the arrival of more people in Labrador and the construction of mega-projects made it more difficult for Inuit to continue this subsistence living as many of the habitats of their traditional hunting grounds were destroyed or changed. The following is a brief look at the traditional Inuit annual cycle. As you read, consider how external forces would have brought changes to this lifestyle from the 1930s to 1949.

Early autumn to mid-December: Inuit went inland to hunt caribou. About the middle of October they moved to their winter camps, where they repaired and entered semi-permanent winter houses. The exact locations of these camps have been determined by archaeological surveys. All of these sites were ideally situated for intercepting the herds of harp seals.

From mid-December to March: Inuit hunted seals found out on the sinâ or edge of the sea ice. Inuit did not hoard. When they were hungry they would send out a Kamutik to their inland areas to retrieve the caribou meat that had been cached during the autumn. Fish that had been cached would also be retrieved, as needed.

In late winter (March to April): Hunting productivity was low. Inuit fished through the ice to augment their food resources.

In spring (May to June): Winter snowhouses were abandoned in favour of tents. Kajak hunting occurred – mostly for bearded seals until the arrival of the harp seals. It was also common to hunt eider ducks and collect their eggs. This was also the season when beluga whales were hunted.

Summer (July to August): Inuit would leave their spring camps to hunt for sea mammals and to fish for Atlantic salmon; in late summer they would fish for char.

Mid-August to mid-October: Inuit would obtain caribou hides for the coming winter to make warm winter clothing and bedding.

Innu

As with other groups in Labrador, Innu were affected by the Great Depression and the worldwide drop in fur prices in the 1930s. At the same time, there was a decline in the caribou population brought about by increased logging on Innu traditional grounds. For example, during the 1930s and 1940s the Quebec North Shore Paper Company gained control of more and more land. By 1950, it controlled approximately 15 500 square kilometres (6000 square miles) of timber land on or near traditional hunting areas. Further interference in Innu hunting patterns occurred in the mid-1930s, when hunting regulations were established by the Newfoundland government and enforced by Newfoundland Rangers – although Innu had been hunting for hundreds of years guided by their own respect for animals.

Innu also experienced a decline in the stock of fur-bearing animals as Metis trappers began using Innu hunting grounds, too. A Finnish geographer of the time, Väinö Tanner, estimated that in 1939 there were 15 000 traps on the Naskaupi and Hamilton River systems. Unable to obtain enough furs and caribou to adequately provide for their families, many Innu were left with no choice but to look for assistance from the government. Increased reliance on government relief, however, made it difficult for Innu to maintain a migratory lifestyle. Instead of travelling the great distances they had traditionally, many Innu remained close to settlements where missionaries and government representatives worked.

The Innu population was ministered to by the Catholic Church, at first by Oblates* from Canada, then in the 1920s by the Diocese of Harbour Grace in Newfoundland. Father Edward O'Brien visited from the 1920s to 1945 and, in 1927, he extended his mission to Old Davis Inlet. Father O'Brien was instrumental in persuading the Innu to move to Sheshatshiu as more and more non-Innu were settling on traditional Innu territory. He converted the abandoned Revillons Frères trading post there into a church and baptized

For instance, when a caribou was skinned, nothing was wasted, or left lying around. People followed the animals; they never stayed in one place for a long time, so the animals were not depleted.

*An "Oblate" is a lay person dedicated to religious work or the religious life.

5.100 "Pokue and family" and "Innu children"
These pictures of an Innu family and Innu children were taken pre-1960 when they visited a storekeeper in the Voisey's Bay area.

5.101 Innu making a birch bark canoe, c. 1930s

and married many Innu. Father O'Brien often sought the help of the government for Innu during his 26 years in Labrador, championing their cause and even intervening with the HBC on their behalf. He kept valuable records, took numerous photographs (See fig. 5.102 as an example), and took the first census of Innu. Like others, however, Father O'Brien would not allow Innu to practise their own rituals, and Innu religion was only practised when Innu returned to the bush.

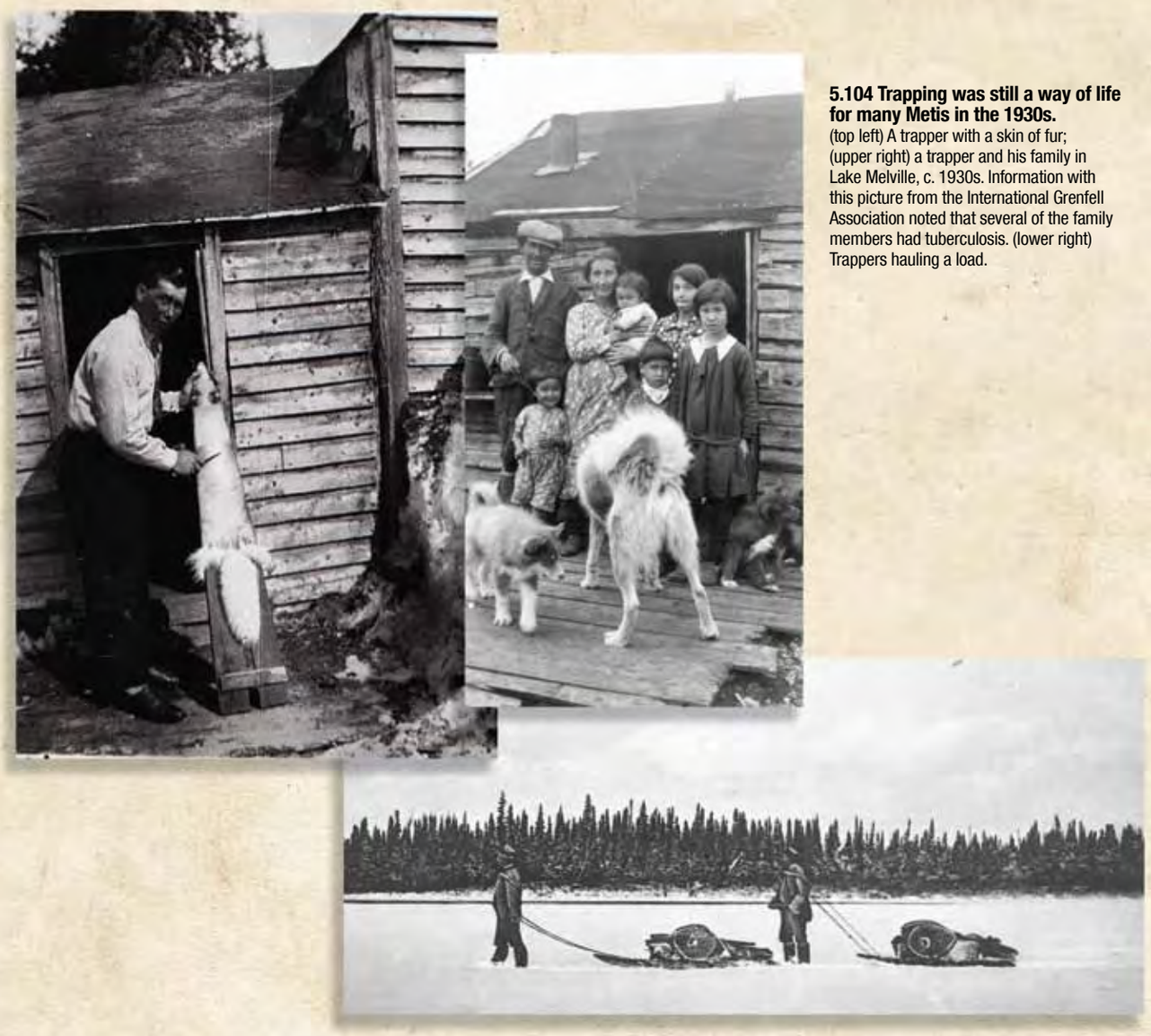
5.102 A husband and wife from the North West River area, c. 1930
This picture was taken by Father Edward O'Brien.

WOMEN IN INNU SOCIETY

Each person in Innu society had an important role. Decisions were made by both men and women. A problem was discussed and a decision was made by all. When the men were gone hunting or trapping, elderly women in the camp made the decisions. Husbands respected their wives and acknowledged the work they did. The following are some of the typical chores an Innu woman may have traditionally done in a day:

- **Make a fire to heat water for washing**
- **Cook for the children**
- **Clean dishes**
- **Clean blankets and tent**
- **If caribou had been caught, clean the meat and prepare it for smoking or drying**
- **Get boughs for floor of the tent**
- **Spend time outside with the children, perhaps on a hike to go partridge hunting or berry picking**
- **Sew**
- **Make bread**
- **Prepare the main evening meal for the hunters' return**
- **Put the children to bed – children were often told bedtime stories about animals and the traditional lifestyle**
- **Sometimes wives would hunt with their husbands. When they did this, the oldest daughter would be in charge of the family.**

5.103 Women and children in a camp at North West River



5.104 Trapping was still a way of life for many Metis in the 1930s.
(top left) A trapper with a skin of fur; (upper right) a trapper and his family in Lake Melville, c. 1930s. Information with this picture from the International Grenfell Association noted that several of the family members had tuberculosis. (lower right) Trappers hauling a load.

Metis

Metis life continued to be one of hunting and gathering, augmented by commercial trapping and fishing. After the 1929 stock market crash, the price of fish dropped dramatically. Although trapping was affected, it provided a modest living for most Metis.

In Upper Lake Melville the Hudson's Bay Company was given competition by the Revillon Brothers and by trapper-trader John Groves. It was also given competition by the Fequets in Sandwich Bay. In Aboriginal tradition, Labrador Metis had their own social support system separate from government. The person who inherited a trap line gave 30 per cent of his gross earnings on the trap line to the family of the previous owner.

During the Second World War, the demand for fur declined, but a major air base was constructed at Goose Bay in Central Labrador and many people from all parts of Labrador came to work on the base. Although many continued commercial trapping and fishing, this marked the beginning of the end for a subsistence way of life for Metis, as people moved to a more reliable cash economy.

From the 1920s, increased missionary activity added a new dimension to life for Metis. The International Grenfell Association established a hospital and a residential school in North West River, Cartwright, and Battle Harbour regions. People not only experienced better health care, but the children were being educated to face the challenges of a changing society. During this time, some people gave up commercial trapping and fishing to work for the mission.

An important missionary was Methodist Reverend Dr. Lester Burry. He did much to alleviate the loneliness and isolation experienced by trappers on their trap lines. From September to Christmas, and sometimes until March, trappers were alone on their trap lines deep in the heart of Labrador. The only way to send or receive a message from home was to leave a note at the end of a trail and hope that someone would come along and bring the note to the end of the next trapper's trap line. This would occur all the way down "the river" to his family.

In 1937 Dr. Burry built four radios and distributed them

5.105 Hauling up a boat in Table Bay in the early 1940s

5.106 Rev. Lester Burry

to trappers on the trap line. On November 20, 1937 he made his first broadcast. Trappers could now receive news from home, weather forecasts, and Sunday services.

Dr. Burry also introduced democracy to Labrador. Until the Confederation debates, the people of Labrador did not have the right to participate in elections and had no representative in any Government House of Assembly, although they paid taxes to Newfoundland. Dr. Burry* was the first Labrador representative in government. He encouraged Labrador people to support confederation. The Labrador vote helped ensure Newfoundland's confederation with Canada, which not only dramatically changed the life of people in Labrador, but on the island of Newfoundland, as well.

*Rev. Burry was the Labrador representative to the National Convention and one of the "Ottawa Delegation" that went to discuss the possibility of Confederation with Canada.

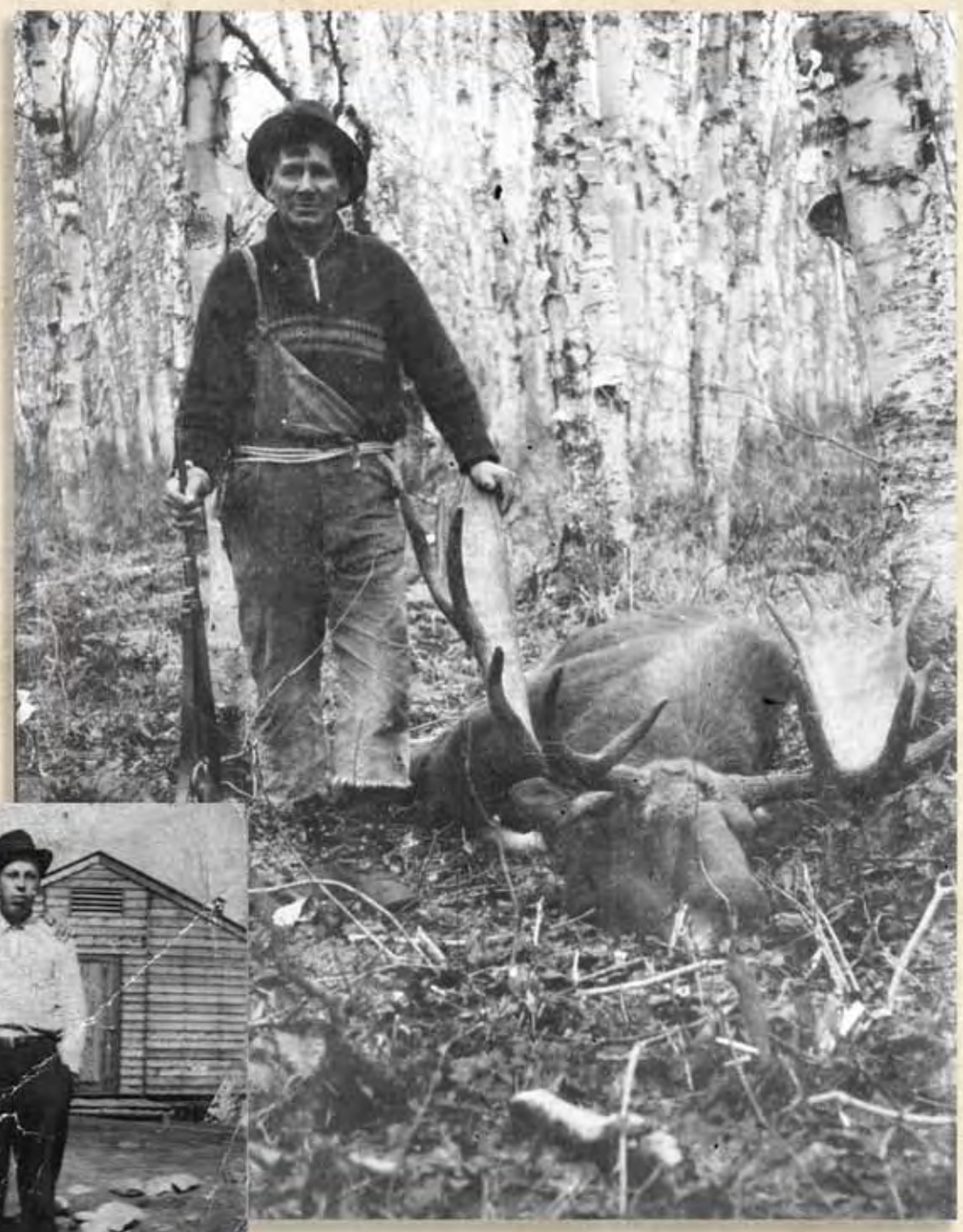
A NEW LIFE IN HAPPY VALLEY AND GOOSE BAY

In the following excerpts from *Woman of Labrador* (1973), Elizabeth Goudie shares some of her memories of the changes introduced to her life by the building of the base at Goose Bay.

"1939 brought the old life of Labrador to a close. The war was on then and in 1940 people began to talk about an air base being built in Goose Bay … Everyone was so happy. There was going to be work for our men. We were going to have a chance to earn a steady income."

"[At first] … we still lived on in Mud Lake. Jim worked in summer and trapped in winter. We were bothered with heavy colds and flu and a lot of us got quite sick. The doctor said it was because of the new people that had moved into Labrador … There were a few of our old people who died of heavy colds and pneumonia when the base first came to Goose Bay."

"The next year, 1944, we moved to the Valley. I had lived 25 years in Mud Lake. I was sorry to move because I had gardens in Mud Lake … We came in August and had to cut all the birches and spruces off the bank to put down our tent camp. Although my husband was working every day, he got some second-hand lumber and whatever else he could get to build a little shack for the winter. We camped from August until October when we moved into the house. It was pretty small, about 18 by 20 feet …"



5.107 A Mi'kmaw hunting guide near Gander River, c. 1930s

5.108 Two young men from Conne River

Mi'kmaq

As for many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, the 1930s brought hard times to Mi'kmaq. In addition to facing the near extinction of caribou in their traditional hunting lands, they too had to deal with the effects of the Great Depression and the worldwide drop in fur prices. By 1945 there were no full-time trappers left in Conne River (Miawpukek), the largest Mi'kmaw community.

Some Mi'kmaq were able to find work as loggers or as guides for hunters in the 1930s. This represented one of the few sources of cash for the community. The Second World War brought a measure of improvement for some Mi'kmaq, as it did for many other Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and several Mik'maq joined the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit as loggers. Also Bowaters began pulpwood operations in the Conne River area in the early 1940s and this provided work for some. However, hunting, fishing, and gathering berries remained a necessary part of most peoples' lives into the 1970s.

In an article in *The Coaster*, Conne River resident John Nicholas Jeddore shared some memories of his life in that community during the 1930s and 1940s:

5.109 John Nicholas Jeddore was born in Conne River in 1922.

"I finished school when I was eight years old. From that point on – 1930 to 1941 – I used to go hunting and trapping each year with my father … We would start hunting caribou in late September and probably kill seven or eight for the fall and winter. We would dry the meat, which would be a good part of our winter's food supply. It would get as mouldy as hell at times, but it was still good to eat.

"After the caribou hunt was over the prime 'furring time' would be starting and we would spend the rest of the fall and winter trapping beaver and otter. We would live in wigwams in the country while on our trips. We'd spend about seven days in each wigwam until we came back to the main wigwam again. This was my life until I went overseas [as a member of the British Forestry Unit in Scotland] in 1941.

[Back in Conne River after the war …] The bottom had fallen out of the trapping industry by 1945, so I went to work for Bowater's cutting pulpwood – a job I held until 1954."

By the late 1940s, Mi'kmaq lived in 11 small communities scattered across the southern, western, and northern parts of the island of Newfoundland. However, in 1946 when Newfoundland was discussing confederation with Canada, the Director of Indian Affairs erroneously reported that there were no Aboriginal people on the island. Again when confederation was settled, Premier Joey Smallwood did not list the Mi'kmaq as Aboriginals. It would be several more decades before any Mi'kmaq would receive government recognition.

5.110 Mi'kmaw star
Chief Jasen S. Benwah of the Benoit First Nation notes this symbol "is a revision of the seven-pointed star that has been used for centuries as the symbol for the sun, but it also represents the original seven districts of the Mi'kmaq Nation which later became eight districts with the addition of Taqamkuk (Newfoundland). There is a similar one that is the hieroglyph for a star. It has many variations and is one of the petroglyphs that can be traced back over 500 years in Bedford, Nova Scotia."

Questions:

1. Use a graphic organizer to identify the problems faced by Aboriginal groups in Newfoundland and Labrador during this time period. Which was the most significant problem? Explain.
2. What alternative forms of employment (unrelated to traditional lifestyle) were available to Aboriginal people?

TOPIC 5.8

The National Convention

A referendum is a direct vote in which an entire electorate is asked to accept or reject a particular proposal. What types of issues would prompt a government to hold a referendum?

Why are some people apathetic towards politics?

WEATHER FORECAST

The Daily News

Newfoundland's Only Morning Newspaper

ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1945

Newfoundlanders To Vote On Future Government

Election Representatives To National Convention Will Probably Be Held Early June

5.111 Excerpt from *The Daily News*, Dec. 12, 1945

5.112 Governor Gordon MacDonald at the formal opening of the National Convention, Sept. 11, 1946, Colonial Building, St. John's.

Introduction

Newfoundland and Labrador's 1933 agreement with Britain stated, in effect, that the Commission of Government would stay in office until the country was once again financially self-supporting and a request was made for the return of responsible government. However, the Commission of Government remained in power for 15 years – much longer than most people had expected. This was due to the continuing effects of the Great Depression on Newfoundland's economy during the 1930s and the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

Although the Second World War temporarily suspended political change, it also gave Newfoundland the financial resources it needed to end Commission of Government. Wartime prosperity brought full employment and greatly increased government revenues. The Commission reported the first of several surpluses in 1941 and made a series of interest-free loans to Britain in the following years. By 1942, Newfoundland, British, and Canadian officials recognized the Commission would likely disappear when the war was over. But what form of government would replace it?

A New Path

The British government began to consider this question in 1942. Officials were pessimistic about Newfoundland's ability to exist as an independent country and worried that, once the wartime boom ended, its economy would again deteriorate and Britain might once more be called on to financially help out Newfoundland. Officials in the Dominions Office soon thought that Newfoundland should join Canada and benefit from that country's more stable economy. This possibility also appealed to many Canadian officials. The war had shown Canada that it had important and permanent interests in Newfoundland, which needed to be protected. Apprehension also existed in Ottawa that Newfoundland might draw closer to the United States than Canada once the war ended.

It would ultimately be up to the Newfoundland people to decide their own political fate, however, and in 1943 a "goodwill mission" of three British Members of Parliament visited Newfoundland to determine which form of government residents favoured. Their investigations indicated that a fair degree of uncertainty existed – although very few people seemed interested in confederation, there was also widespread unease about an immediate and unconditional return to responsible government status. Recognizing that no form of elected government had existed in Newfoundland since 1934 and people were no longer accustomed to party politics, British officials decided that a process of political education was needed before Newfoundlanders and Labradorians decided on their future. In November 1943, the Dominions Secretary recommended that once hostilities ended, the British government should provide "machinery … for enabling the Newfoundland people to examine the situation and to express their considered views as to the form of Government they desire."

The exact nature of this "machinery" was revealed on December 11, 1945, when British Prime Minister Clement Atlee announced in the House of Commons that the Newfoundland public would elect representatives to a National Convention. The mandate of this National Convention would be to investigate Newfoundland's economic, social, and political status and recommend which forms of government should be placed on a referendum ballot. The referendum was tentatively scheduled for the fall of 1947.

5.113 The Second World War highlighted the importance of Newfoundland and Labrador's strategic defensive position to North America.
Shown here are civilians mixing with Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) members at a dance at the RCAF Station in Gander, in March 1945.

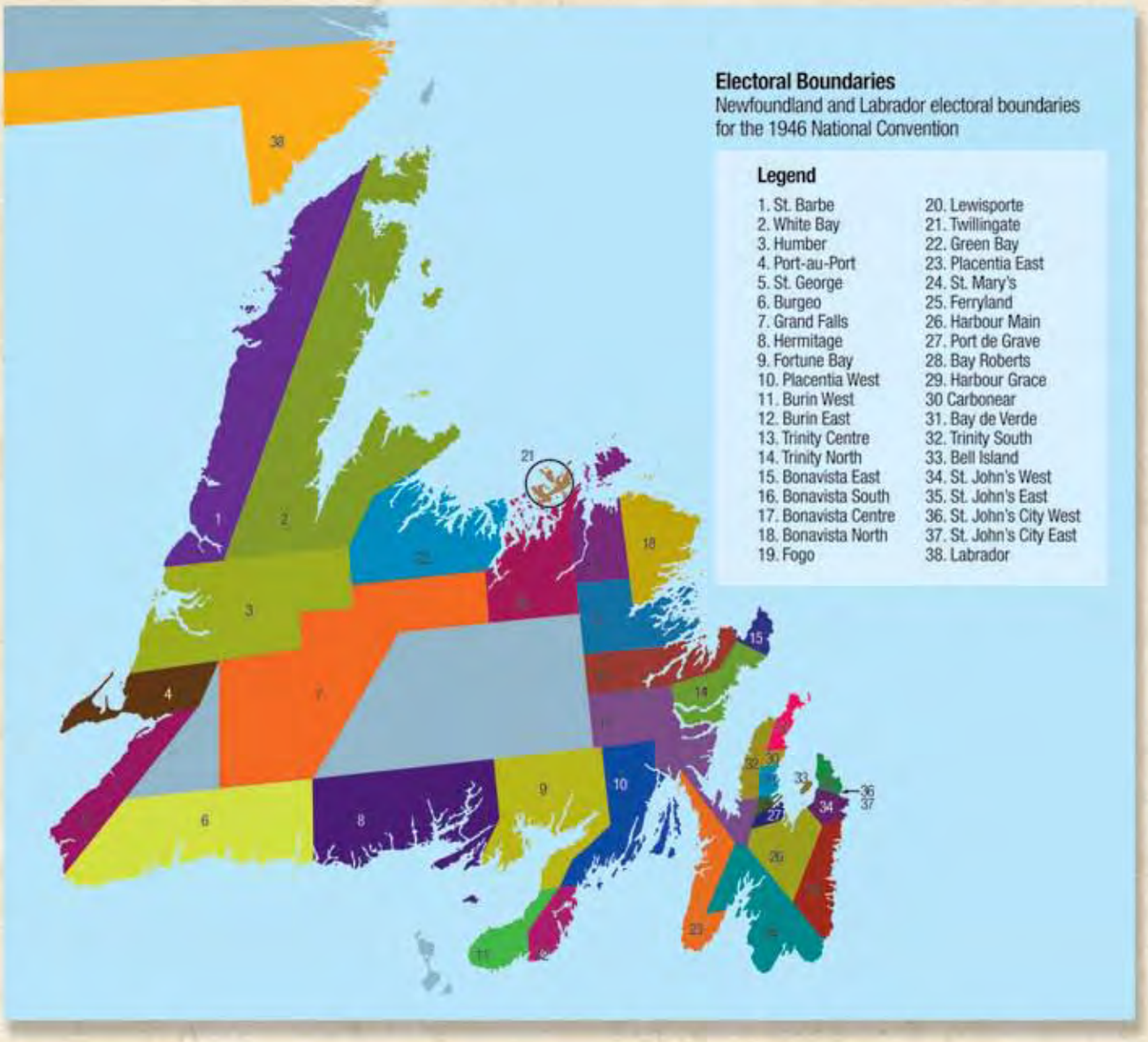
WHY DID CANADA WANT NEWOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR?

Canada had several key reasons for wanting Newfoundland in confederation:

- **to gain control of its natural resources**
- **to improve national defence**
- **to prevent the United States from acquiring undue influence in the region**

As historian Peter Neary explains, "… Confederation would secure Canada's eastern frontier, simplify her defence administration, and head off the looming threat of a Newfoundland ever more closely tied to the United States. The transformation of Newfoundland into a 'garrison country' during the Second World War and the entry of the United States into the region had fundamentally altered Anglo-Canadian Newfoundland relations."

After the war, unease grew in Canada about the continued American military presence in Newfoundland. In 1903, Canada had essentially lost out to the United States in a bid for an area along the Pacific Ocean now known as the Alaska Panhandle. It wanted to avoid being similarly hemmed in on its Atlantic coast. Embracing Newfoundland within confederation would not only give control over such strategic locations as Gander airport and St. John's harbour, but also positively affect Canada's national outlook and show that Canada was just as serious in world affairs during peacetime as during war.



5.114 Newfoundland and Labrador electoral boundaries for the 1946 National Convention.

*Labrador voters sent United Church clergyman, Rev. Lester Burry to the National Convention; he was the region's first political representative.

The Creation of the National Convention

On June 21 1946, voters in Newfoundland and in Labrador elected 45 members from 38 districts to the National Convention. This was the first general election since 1932 and the first time in history that Labrador residents were able to vote. Nevertheless, voter turnout was low in most districts, excluding St. John's, where about 60 per cent of voters went to the polls. About half of all the candidates elected were businessmen or merchants; the others included journalists, teachers, union leaders, lawyers, and clergymen.

The National Convention met for the first time on September 11, 1946. It established 10 committees to examine various aspects of the country's economy and society. Their reports were to be brought to the full Convention for discussion and adoption. When this process was completed, it was the responsibility of the finance committee, using the information provided in the reports, to write a consolidated report on the economic and financial situation and the country's outlook.

"It shall be the duty and function of the Convention to ... examine the position of the country and to make recommendations to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom as to possible forms of future government to be put before the people at a national referendum."

– From Section 3 of the *National Convention Act* of 1946

*The National Convention debates were broadcast to thousands of listeners over the government radio station, VONF.

Ottawa/London Delegations

It was assumed that discussion of possible future forms of government would occur only after committee work was finished. However, this orderly program was upset on October 28, less than two months after the Convention's first meeting – when Joseph R. Smallwood moved that a delegation should visit Ottawa to ascertain possible terms of union with Canada. Smallwood's motion had only 17 supporters, and started a bitter and divisive debate* that split the Convention into pro-confederate and anti-confederate groups. In these circumstances, an impartial assessment of the country's condition and prospects became a near impossibility.

In the end, the Convention decided to send delegations to London and Ottawa, with both to be led by the Convention's chairman, F. Gordon Bradley, who was an active confederate himself. The London delegation was composed mainly of anti-confederates, of whom the most vocal was Peter Cashin. It left Newfoundland on April 25, 1947, and had three meetings with a British delegation headed by the Dominions Secretary. The British made it clear that if Newfoundland decided to return to responsible government, it could expect no financial or economic assistance. This attitude enraged anti-confederate leaders. Cashin delivered an emotional speech to the Convention on May 19, claiming that a conspiracy existed "to sell this country to the Dominion of Canada."

5.115 Peter Cashin

5.116 The London Delegation of the National Convention, May 1947

The Ottawa delegation departed on June 19. Bradley told the Convention its members would be back within a month. However, he and Smallwood, who also was a member of the delegation, had no such intention. Their plan was to stay in Ottawa until they obtained acceptable draft terms of union from the Canadian Government to be discussed by the Convention and then placed before the electorate. This process would, they hoped and expected, postpone the referendum from the fall of 1947 until sometime in 1948 and give confederates more time to promote their cause.

5.117 The Ottawa Delegation of the National Convention, 1947
Shown here (left to right): G.F. Higgins; J.R. Smallwood; T.G.W. Ashbourne; Louis St. Laurent; F. Gordon Bradley; Rev. Lester Burry; C.H. Ballam; and P.W. Crummey.

5.118 Counting telegrams requesting that Confederation be placed on the referendum ballot, 1948
Part of the Confederation petition team. Standing (left to right): J.R. Smallwood and Irving Fogwill. Seated (left to right): Jen Fogwill, Harold Horwood, Clara Smallwood and Roy Pike.

The End Result

Finally, the Convention had to recommend which forms of government should appear on the referendum ballot. All members agreed that both responsible government and the continuation of the Commission of Government should be on the ballot. Smallwood then moved a resolution on January 23, 1948 that confederation with Canada should be a third option. The debate that followed was the climax of the Convention. Long and emotional, it did not end until 5:30 a.m. on January 28. The motion was defeated by 29 votes* to 16, and the Convention dissolved two days later. However, the anti-confederate victory was short-lived. The British government overruled the Convention and announced in early March that confederation would be placed on the ballot after all. It was not going to let the chance slip away that Newfoundland might join Canada.

While some historians have played down the importance of the National Convention, others feel that it had a significant role in our history. As Convention debates were broadcast by radio, the National Convention served as a vehicle of political education. The political apathy so evident in 1946 was replaced by the enthusiastic involvement of an electorate that was much better informed on the country's options – and particularly about confederation and what joining Canada might offer.

*Smallwood later described the opponents of the motion as the "29 dictators."

5.119

… and oh, what a battle it was!

the debate, motion and vote on Newfoundland's entry into Confederation

Joseph Smallwood speaking at the National Convention

I pledge myself to this House and to this country that I will base my ultimate stand in this whole question of confederation upon the nature of the terms that are laid before the Convention and the country. If the terms are such as clearly suggest a better Newfoundland for our people I shall support and maintain them …

These, then, are the conditions of my support of confederation: that it must raise our people's standard of living, that it must give Newfoundlanders a better life, that it must give our country stability and security and that it must give us full, democratic responsible government under circumstances that will ensure its success …

If you adopt this resolution (that the Convention send a delegation to Canada to investigate union), and Canada offers us generous terms, as I believe she will, and Newfoundland decides to shake off her ancient isolation, I believe with all my heart and mind that the people will bless the day this resolution was moved.

Peter Cashin speaking at the National Convention

I say that there is in operation at the present time a conspiracy to sell, and I use the word "sell" advisedly, this country to the Dominion of Canada. I repeat, some people may think I am talking wildly, but I would ask them to remember that long before this I made statements in this house which were regarded at the time as wild prophecies, but time proved that I was right.

All I ask you then to do in the present instance, is to watch events develop in the coming two months, then pass your judgement on the statements I make today. Watch in particular the attractive bait which will be held out to lure our country into the Canadian mouse-trap. Listen to the flowery sales talk which will be offered you, telling Newfoundlanders they are a lost people, that our only hope, our only salvation, lies in following a new Moses into the promised land across the Cabot Strait.

By the way, I note by recent papers, that there are 30 000 men unemployed in the Maritimes alone. Can it be that things are so wonderful in this Paradise that men don't need to work? Gentlemen, before leaving this matter I would say just this, look out for those amongst us who would take ourselves and our country on a one-way ride …

Questions:

1. Why did Britain establish the National Convention instead of immediately returning Newfoundland to responsible government after the war?
2. What was the National Convention? What were its roles?
3. Why might voters have been more apathetic in 1946 than they were in 1948?
4. What role did the media play in the National Convention? How does the media affect your understanding of, and interest in, municipal, provincial, and federal politics?

AT ISSUE

The Right to Vote

5.120 Sign at polling station

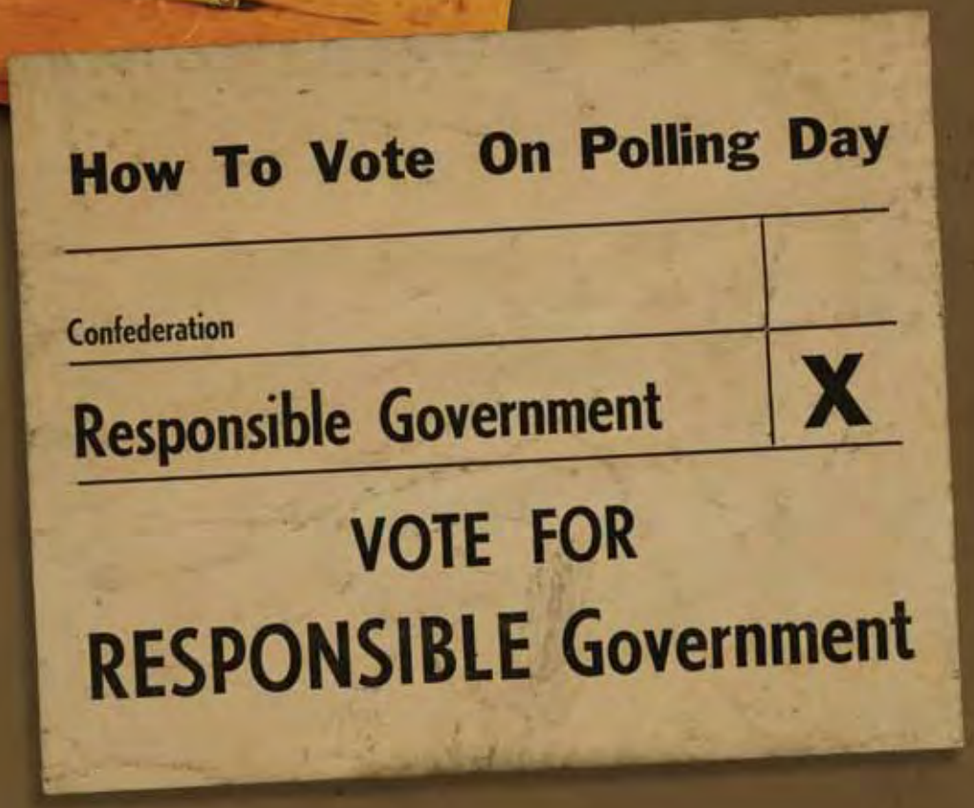
Government voting rights in Newfoundland and Labrador have undergone several changes in the last two centuries. Today we have universal suffrage, but a significant portion of the eligible population still does not vote. Why is this? Is voting a right or is it a responsibility?

During the era of the migratory fisheries, no form of elected government existed in the colony and residents were governed by British authorities. This changed in 1832, after a local reform movement convinced Britain to grant the colony representative government. Voting rights were extended to male British subjects who were at least 21 years old and had lived on the island as tenants or property owners for at least one full year* before the election took place. Women were not allowed to vote, nor were Labrador residents.

Unlike today, early voters did not cast their ballots in secret and instead had to stand and be counted at the various polling stations. Lack of privacy left voters vulnerable to intimidation or bribery from individuals wishing to manipulate election results, and bullying did occur at some polling stations. This changed in 1887, when the Newfoundland government passed laws requiring all elections to be held by secret ballot. Another difference between voting methods then and now is that in the 1830s the voting process often took days to complete and did not always occur at the same time in the various districts. In 1832, for example, polling at Conception Bay lasted from October 31 to November 3, while voting in St. John's ran from November 5 to 12. This changed in 1842, when Britain passed a bill stipulating that all future Newfoundland elections must occur simultaneously.

*Britain increased this to two years in 1842.

5.122 The first ballot box in Newfoundland and Labrador
This box was presented to Sir Robert Bond who introduced the Ballot Bill in 1887, which provided for voting by secret ballot.



5.121 A card from the July 1948 referendum
urging voters to vote for Responsible Government.

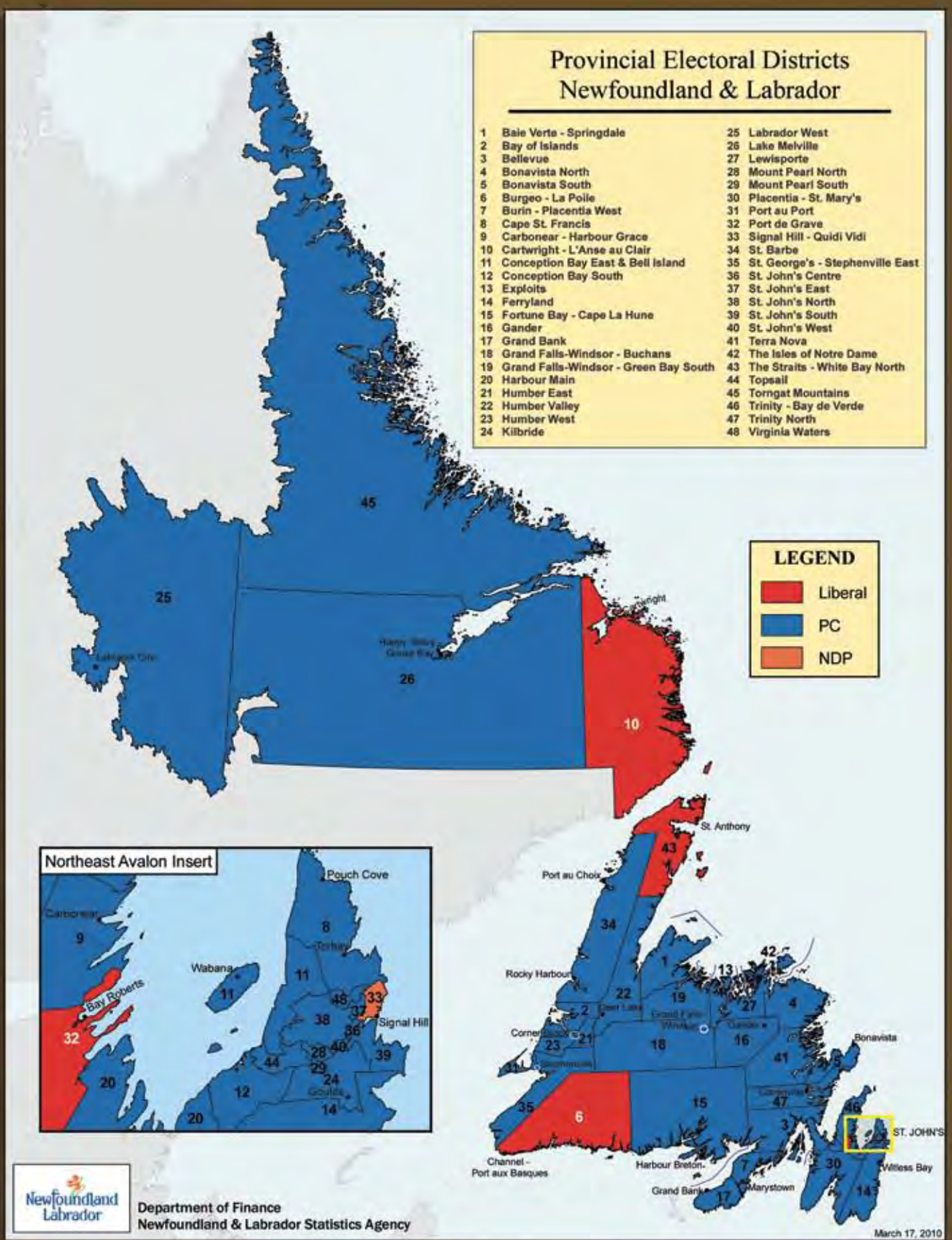
*This was a 90 per cent voter turnout for women on the island!

Women in Newfoundland won the right to vote and run for public office in April 1925, after decades of lobbying government officials. Unlike male residents, however, women had to be 25 years or older to vote. On October 29, 1928, 52 343* Newfoundland women cast ballots in their first general election. Two years later, Lady Helena Squires became the first woman elected into the country's House of Assembly.

In 1934, however, Newfoundland voluntarily suspended its right to self-government and swore in the Commission of Government. It was not until 1946 that people returned to the polls to elect members of the National Convention. This time, all residents age 21 and older were eligible to vote, including those living in Labrador. When the polls opened on June 21, 1946, almost half of all eligible voters had never cast a ballot before, having been too young to participate in the previous election 14 years earlier. Approximately two years later, a slim majority of Newfoundland and Labrador voters (52.3 per cent) chose to join Canada in a 1948 referendum.

Today, residents of this province can participate in municipal, provincial, and federal elections once they reach the age of 18. Governments at all three levels typically remain in office for four years or until a general election is called. A general election takes place in all electoral districts on the same day. In contrast, a by-election typically takes place in a single district. This usually occurs after an individual politician leaves his or her seat between regularly scheduled general elections, making it necessary for voters in that district to elect a new representative.

5.123 Provincial electoral districts as of March 2010



Once an election has been called, there are several ways to vote. The most common way is for a voter to visit the polling station* in his or her district to cast a ballot on election day. Residents who will be unable to do this may apply to participate in advance polls that take place during a specified time period before the actual election day. Additionally, citizens who will be out of their districts on election day may still vote by special ballot – which is essentially a mail-in ballot.

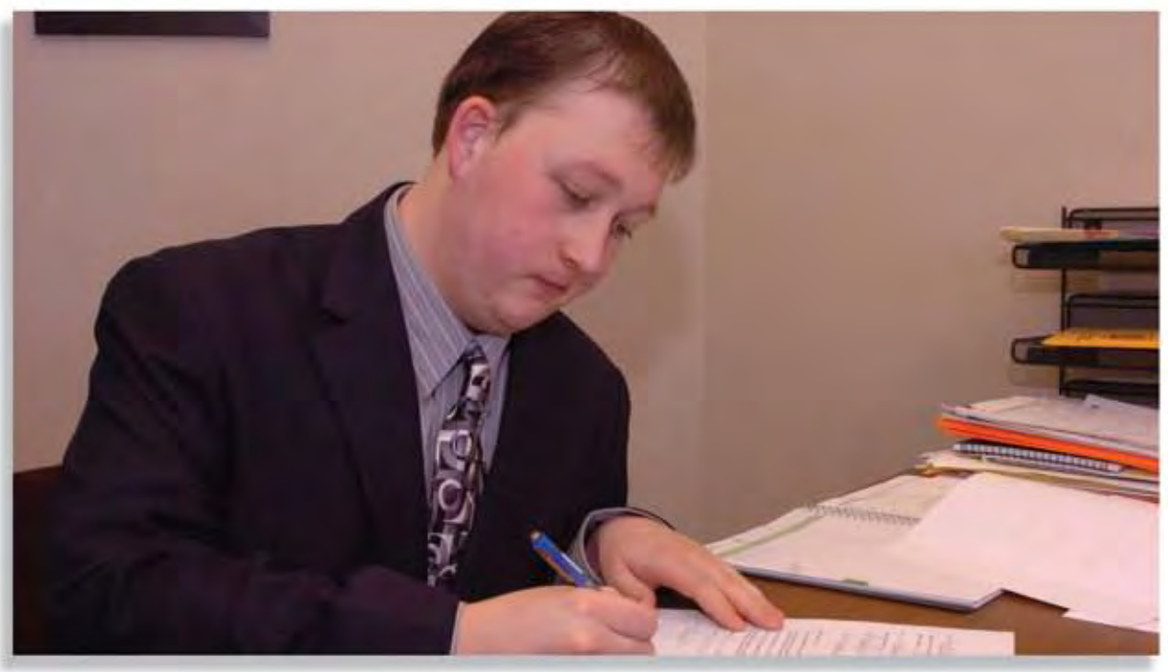
Despite these options and universal suffrage, not all people exercise their right to vote. In the 2007 provincial election, for example, only 60.2 per cent of eligible voters cast ballots. Although voter turnout is low among all age groups, it is particularly a problem among young voters. Elections Canada estimates that only 44 per cent of electors aged 18 to 24 participated in the 2006 federal election, while overall voter turnout was 64.7 per cent.

*Postal voting is also growing in popularity. The city of St. John's, for example, asked voters to use mail-in ballots during its 2009 municipal election instead of visiting polling stations.

Voter turnout for the 2008 federal election was 58.8 per cent – an all-time low. Newfoundland and Labrador had the worst provincial rate of voter turnout with only 48.1 per cent of voters turning out.

"Age … affects (voter) turnout … Recent studies indicate that … not only are young people participating less than their elders, their willingness to participate appears to be declining over time."

– From *A History of the Vote in Canada*, Elections Canada website



5.124 Kurtis Coombs, 19, briefly mayor-elect of Paradise

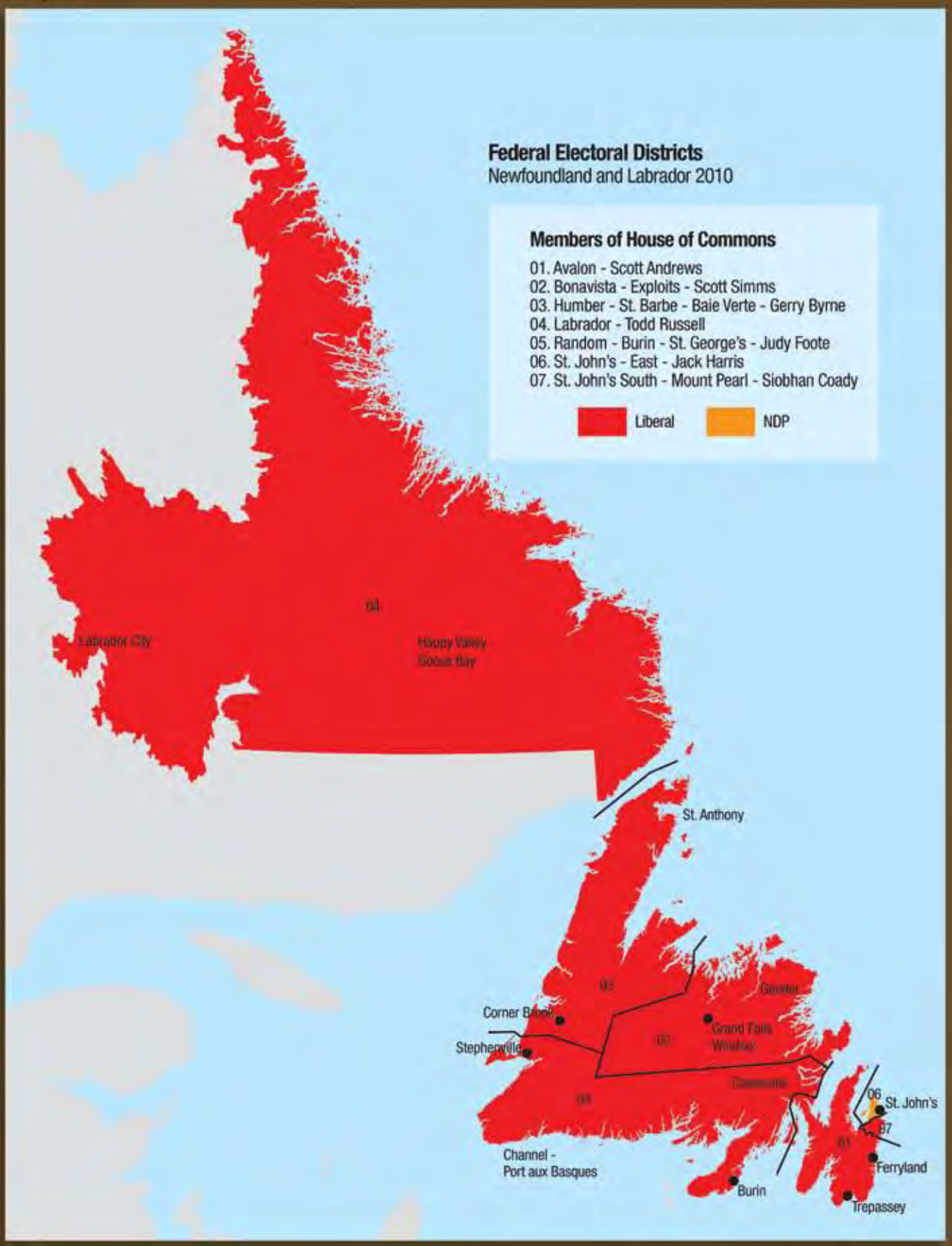
When one vote could have made the difference …

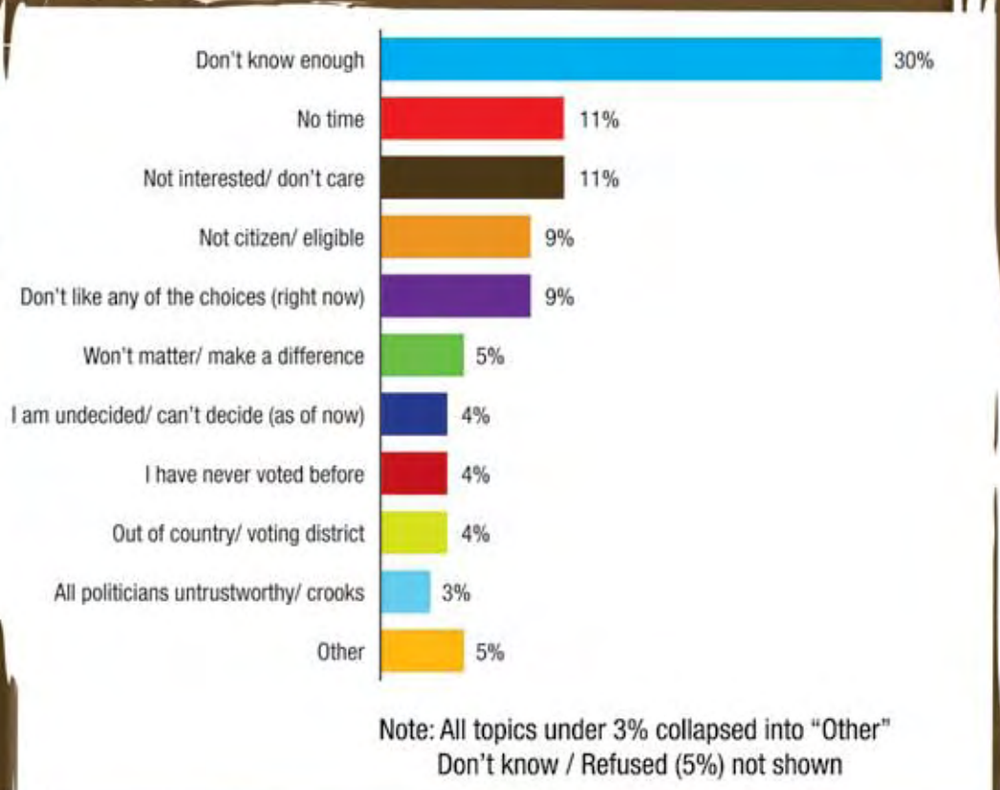
On September 29, 2009, 19-year-old Kurtis Coombs became Canada's youngest mayor after winning a municipal election in Paradise by three votes. Two days later, however, a re-count showed that he had actually tied with fellow candidate Ralph Wiseman. According to provincial law, a draw then had to take place to determine the winner. As a result, both names were written on slips of paper and placed inside a container (a recycling bin was used). In the end, Wiseman's name was pulled out of the box, making him mayor of Paradise. Some Paradise residents called for a re-election, but the provincial Supreme Court ultimately ruled against Coombs' application to overturn the results and have a new election ordered.

In a survey on youth voting, common reasons given by young people for not voting included not having enough information about the candidates running for office, not having enough time, and not being interested. (See fig. 5.124.) Many see this trend of low turnout by young voters as troubling. In a 2008 report, Chief Electoral Officer Paul Reynolds stated: "The youth are our future and if we fail to engage them now, the political history of this province could be lost."

Voting is important because it gives us a say in how our country, province, and communities are governed. By taking part in an election, we choose our political leaders and help our democracy work. Reformers recognized this in the early 1800s and so did suffragists in the early 1900s – that's why they fought so hard to win the right to vote.

5.125 Federal electoral districts as of 2010





5.126 Top reasons given by youth for not voting

For Discussion:

1. Is it important to vote? Explain.
2. Create a list of ways that people under the age of 18 can be politically active. Which of these have you done? What can you do to be more politically active?
3. What can politicians, election organizers, educators, the media, or society in general do to increase voter turnout among young people?
4. Why did reformers in the early 1800s and women suffragists in the early 1900s fight so hard to win the right to vote?
5. Voting is mandatory in Australia, where voter turnout is usually about 90 per cent. (Compare this to a 58.8 per cent voter turnout in Canada's 2008 federal election). Voters who do not appear at the polls in Australia and do not have a legitimate excuse (such as illness, travel, or religious objections) have to pay a small fine of approximately $15. Do you agree with this policy? Why or why not?

Questions:

1. Do you intend to vote in elections after you turn 18? Why or why not?
2. Ask someone in your family why he or she votes. List the reasons. Do you agree with these reasons? Why or why not?
3. Imagine you are a politician running for office. What would you do to appeal to young voters?
4. Consider the Paradise municipal election in September 2009 (See fig. 5.122). Would a higher voter turnout have prevented the election from resulting in a tie?
5. Will this issue convince more young people to vote? Why?

Chapter Five Review

Summary

In this chapter we studied some of the main events in Newfoundland and in Labrador during the first half of the twentieth century. We began by examining the First World War and how it affected Newfoundland and Labrador. This was followed by a discussion of the women's suffrage movement in Newfoundland. We then studied the Great Depression of the 1930s and its effects on the country. We examined the Amulree Report and its recommendations, and the establishment of the Commission of Government in Newfoundland. Our attention shifted to the study of the Second World War, including the contributions of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to the war effort, and the effects of the war. We examined how Aboriginal groups in Newfoundland and in Labrador were affected during this time period. Finally, we studied the National Convention in 1946 and the result of that convention.

Key Ideas

Specifically, we studied the following key ideas:

- Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and the Newfoundland government, made substantial contributions to the First World War, and experienced significant social, political, and economic effects during and after the war.
- There were four phases of the women's suffrage movement in Newfoundland, which resulted in women receiving the right to vote in 1925.
- Various factors, such as an increasing public debt, the slump in international markets for dried cod, and the Great Depression, created widespread poverty and hardship in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The Newfoundland government was on the verge of bankruptcy and a Royal Commission was appointed in 1933 to decide the country's future. The subsequent Amulree Report recommended that Newfoundland give up responsible government temporarily and be ruled by an appointed Commission of Government.
- A Commission of Government was appointed in Newfoundland in 1934. This government initiated a number of reforms in the fishery, education, public health, welfare, and law enforcement to improve life in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Newfoundlanders and Labradorians made significant contributions to the Second World War. The war had major economic, social, and political impacts on Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Aboriginal groups in Newfoundland and Labrador were impacted by events such as economic diversification, the Great Depression, and the Second World War. They faced challenges in maintaining a traditional lifestyle.
- A National Convention was held in 1946 to investigate Newfoundland's status and recommend which forms of government should be placed on a referendum ballot. As a result of the referendum, Newfoundland became Canada's tenth province in 1949.

Key Terms

Amulree Report
Confederation
Depression
Dole
Gender equality
Leased Bases Agreement
National Convention
National Government
Newfoundland Patriotic Association
Newfoundland Ranger Force
Newfoundland Regiment
Referendum
Reforms
Royal Commission
Suffrage
Subsistence lifestyle
Women's Patriotic Association
Women's Franchise League

Questions

1. What were the most significant social, political, and economic effects of the First World War on Newfoundland and Labrador?

2. What were three main reasons why women won the right to vote in Newfoundland in 1925?

3. What were the negative effects of the Great Depression on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians? What did the Newfoundland Government do to help alleviate these effects? How effective was this approach?

4. What did the Amulree Report recommend? Why was the Amulree Report well-received by most members of the public at the time?

5. What was the most significant reform introduced by the Commission of Government in each of the following areas? Explain why.
   a. Fisheries b. Education c. Public Health d. Welfare e. Law Enforcement

6. What was the main impact of the Second World War on Newfoundland and Labrador? Explain.

7. What challenges to living a traditional lifestyle were faced by Aboriginal groups during the first half of the twentieth century?

8. Outline the process which led to Newfoundland joining Canada in 1949. Was this an acceptable process? Explain.