

Transforming the Liberal State: Gender, Class, and Ethnicity on the Newfoundland Home Front, 1914-1918

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Abstract

In 1914, the Dominion of Newfoundland was thrust into a total war effort. Like other British Dominions, Newfoundland committed its entire civilian population, economy, science, and technology to fighting the war. This dissertation examines how such commitment led to reconceptualizations of gender, class, and ethnicity for the sake of the war effort. Such reconceptualized identities were evident in wartime social phenomena such as prohibition, price control, food rationing, taxation, women's war work, the treatment of enemy aliens, conscription and food rationing. In each of these cases, Newfoundland's commitment to the war effort reconfigured gender, class, and ethnicity to help Newfoundland prosecute the war effort, and cope with conditions on the Homefront.

This dissertation will argue that alterations to wartime conceptions of gender, class and ethnicity not only allowed Newfoundland to maintain a total war effort but drastically changed the nature of liberal governance in the Dominion. Prior to the war, liberal thinkers focused on the rights of the individual, believing that the government should interfere with the daily lives of individuals as little as possible. As the war progressed, both liberals and Progressives argued that the government owed a duty to maintain the ranks of the Newfoundland Regiment. In return for soldier's service, many argued that the government owed it to citizens to interfere in free markets, prohibit alcohol, and impose taxation to ensure that citizens maintained a certain standard of living.

As a result of the demands of both liberals and Progressives, the Newfoundland government abandoned the traditional liberal focus on the rights of the individual and committed to protecting the rights of all citizens by focusing on the rights of the

community. By the end of the war, liberalism in Newfoundland looked much less like Classical Liberalism and much more like a burgeoning Social Liberalism that focused far less on the rights of the individual and far more on the rights of the community.

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Introduction

In his famous article titled “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” Ian McKay invited Canadian historians to examine what he called the “Canadian Liberal Revolution,” or the gradual hegemonic dominance of a liberal order across the British Colonies and the Dominion of Canada between 1840 and 1940.¹ McKay’s definition of “liberalism” comes from Fernande Roy’s *Progress, harmonies, liberty: Les liberalism des milieu affairs francophones à Montréal au tournant du siècle*. Roy defines liberalism as a political philosophy that places the utmost importance on the concept of the individual, who is responsible only to themselves and whose freedoms should only be limited by the state when they infringe on the freedoms of others. There are three main defining characteristics to McKay’s liberalism: liberty (the freedom of speech, conscience, labour, and press); equality (all individuals are equal under the law) and property (every individual had the right to own property.)

In 2009, Jean-François Constant and Michel Ducharme edited a collection of articles debating McKay’s conception of a Canadian liberal order. In their introduction, Constant and Ducharme concur with McKay that the period between 1900 and 1940 was a passive revolution whereby the liberal order made compromises in response to the First World War, the Depression, and the Second World War in order to maintain hegemony in Canada.² However, Constant and Ducharme criticize McKay for his assertion that the

¹ Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History” *The Canadian Historical Review* 81, No. 4 (December 2000), 625,635.

² Jean-Francois Constant, and Michel Ducharme, edit. *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating Canadian Liberal Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 19.

liberal order framework is irrelevant after 1940 because, according to them, the liberal order was alive and well following the Second World War.

This dissertation builds on the work of McKay, Constant, and Ducharme by examining precisely how the liberal order changed in Newfoundland during the First World War. Like Constant and Ducharme, my research has indicated that the liberal state in Newfoundland underwent profound changes between 1914 and 1919. The key to understanding these changes is in understanding the importance and contradictions of the liberal concept of the “individual.” As Constant and Ducharme point out, the liberal “individual” never comprised all human beings, and constantly shifted:

It is equally undeniable that, despite its pretensions to universality, liberalism has not always granted the status of individual to all human beings... In fact, between the middle of the nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth, the very definition of an individual was based on a collective consideration of class, race, and gender.³

To understand the workings of the liberal state during the war, there are two things that are crucial to understand. First, given shifting understandings of the liberal concept of the individual, one must understand how the war changed conceptions of gender, ethnicity, and class. Second, given the liberal importance placed on the rights of the individual, it is imperative to understand the shifting rights and responsibilities that the state expected of citizens and vice-versa. This dissertation will argue that, in Newfoundland, during the First World War, the liberal state underwent a profound change as the war fundamentally altered classical liberalism, transforming it to a burgeoning social liberalism. The rights and

³ *Liberalism and Hegemony*, 7.

responsibilities of both the state and citizens were altered and who should be afforded the status of a liberal individual drastically changed.

To understand the power that war has to change social conventions, one must understand the requirements of a total war effort. An early thinker on the concept of total war was German soldier and historian Ernst Jünger who coined the term *Die totale Mobilmachung* (total mobilization) to describe the way that societies mobilized themselves entirely during the First World War.⁴ Later Erich Ludendorff described the *Totale Krieg* (total war) to describe the process of the total mobilization, both physically and spiritually, of nations who were fighting the war.⁵

In the introduction to a collection of essays titled *State, Society, and Mobilization in Europe During the First World War*, John Horne argues that the national mobilization for total wars brought profound political and cultural changes as the governments and citizens rallied to the cause.⁶ Horne points out that national mobilization for the war pervaded many aspects of society:

Investigating mobilization at this level therefore involves the plans and projects of the state, which sought to stimulate and control ‘opinion’ and ‘morale’ (civil as well as military) to a degree and in ways that were hitherto inconceivable. But it also encompasses society, many elements of which ultimately proved indifferent or resistant to state led forms of mobilization or sought to redirect these in more autonomous ways. The study of total mobilization is partly about the projections of military and civilian planners; but it is also about the lived relationship of a variety of different groups (intellectuals, school teachers, children, soldiers, and many more) to the war and its meaning.⁷

⁴ Ernst Jünger, *Krieg und Krieger* (Berlin: Junker and Dünhaupt, 1930), 127.

⁵ John Horne, edit., *State, Society, and Mobilization in Europe During the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4.

⁶ Horne, *State Society and Mobilization*, 3.

⁷ Horne, *State Society and Mobilization*, 5.

Horne maintains that total war was about more than just physical mobilization for war and argues that it had profound political and cultural impacts on society.

Edmund Russell's book, *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from World War I to Silent Spring*, draws on the work of Italian military theorist Giulio Douhet to understand the concept of a total war. To illustrate Douhet's thinking on total war, Russell provides the following quotation:

Prevailing forms of social organization have given war a character of national totality – that is, the entire population and all the resources of a nation are sucked into the maw of war. And, since society is now definitely evolving along this line, it is within the power of human foresight to see now that future wars will be *total* in character and scope.⁸

This quote suggests that in a total war all elements and resources of a society, including nature, are utilized to fight the war. Russell posits that the First World War was one of the first wars to become all encompassing, drawing on science, technology, propaganda, civilian populations, and national economies to fight a total war effort.⁹

Borrowing from Jünger, Ludendorff, Horne, and Russell, I use the concept of total war to understand societal changes that occurred in Newfoundland as the citizens and the state mobilized the Dominion for war. In order to wage a total war, nations utilized more than just science, technology, propaganda, civilian populations, and economies but also the conceptions of gender, ethnicity and class that existed in peacetime. By altering these conceptions, the liberal state could ensure that civilian's ideas about gender, ethnicity, and class were rearranged to support the war effort. These wartime conceptions underpinned

⁸ Edmund Russell, *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from World War I to Silent Spring* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 96.

⁹ Russell, *War and Nature*, 96.

many aspects of a total war effort including recruiting, conscription, women's war work, taxation, food rationing, price control, and prohibition.

The requirements of a total war effort caused the wartime reordering of liberal governance. Whereas prior to the war, upper class, white, men primarily received the status of "individual," the First World War required people of all ethnicities, genders, and classes to work together to both prosecute Newfoundland's war effort and to cope with the conditions of the home front. As a result, the government renegotiated a social covenant with the citizens of Newfoundland, redefining who was awarded the status of an individual based on wartime prescriptions of gender, ethnicity, and class. This social covenant changed not only what the liberal state expected of its citizens but what citizens came to expect from the liberal state.

In addition to the conception of the individual, a key element of McKay's liberalism is the concept of liberty, which maintained that the individual had an *inviolable* right to freedom of labour, speech, conscience, the press. The individual was responsible only to themselves, and the state's primary goal was to safeguard the freedom of the individual, only restricting their liberty when the actions of one individual infringed on the liberty of another. The First World War also caused a dramatic renegotiation of the perceived rights of the individual. As part of the wartime social covenant the government coerced and conscripted citizens into the military and stripped their right to freedom of speech, press, and conscience. In return for the loss of these freedoms, citizens demanded that the government protect them from the conditions of the home front through market regulations, the prohibition of alcohol, and the imposition of taxation to support the war effort.

I will argue that during the First World War, Newfoundland's war effort caused a profound renegotiation of the liberal order as the government and the people sought to cope with the war effort and the conditions on the home front. The result of these renegotiations was a new social covenant between citizens and the state whereby wartime conceptions of gender, ethnicity and class reshaped traditional liberal ideas about the "individual." Furthermore, the negotiation of this social covenant also required the alteration of traditional liberal concepts of liberty. In return for citizens' military and civil service to the state, the people expected greater levels of government protections from adverse conditions on the home front.

In response to wartime conditions on the home front, various segment of Newfoundland's citizenry renegotiated the underpinnings of the Liberal state. The first significant change stemmed from the boost the war gave to the local temperance movement. Bolstered by a new discourse of war-related patriotism and sacrifice, temperance advocates convinced people that the state had a duty to prioritize collective needs over those of the individual by prohibiting the consumption of alcohol. As the war developed, a Progressive movement began to demand that the government regulate coal and food prices.¹⁰ The government's defence of free-market principles prompted a class-

¹⁰ Throughout this dissertation I use the term Progressive to refer to a increasingly common but heterogeneous political view, common throughout the western world, which saw social problems as having social rather than individual causes and advocated for some form of voluntary and/or state collective response as they only way to address them. Progressivism in twentieth century Newfoundland is best represented by the Fishermen's Protective Union, who sought to secure a more equitable distribution of wealth in the fishery, and to improve the lives of the producing class in Newfoundland. For more on Progressivism in wartime Newfoundland see: Sean Cadigan, *Death on Two Fronts: National Tragedies and the Fate of Democracy in Newfoundland, 1914-1934* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2013).

influenced indictment of war profiteering by the St. John's business elite as Progressives associated patriotism with state intervention and the free market with narrow, class self-interest. The negotiation of a more Progressive wartime state intensified with the debate over the need of a business profits tax, an income tax, and a victory loan bond drive to assist in the funding of the war effort. Citizenship had become much more of a social responsibility as a result of the war effort.

While working people stood to benefit from the development of a more Progressive wartime state, a stronger collective identity based on patriotism intruded on individual rights along ethnic lines. Concerns about the possible subversive presence of enemy aliens within Newfoundland led to the development of ethnic categories of who might be considered "German" or "Austro-Hungarian," regardless of whether one was German, Austro-Hungarian or not. Due to their voluntary public support of the war effort, Syrian immigrants, who came from Ottoman Empire, escaped the restrictions on individual liberties that were placed on Germans and Austro-Hungarians. Voluntarism was at the heart of an engendered dimension of emphasizing social obligations over individual rights. The enlistment demands of the Newfoundland Regiment and the general war effort meant a new emphasis on military service as the highest expression of masculinity and British identity. If sufficient numbers of men failed to embrace their masculine obligations, then it was the duty of the state to compel them through conscription, a policy that came into effect following much public debate in 1917-18. While there is some evidence that women may have encouraged voluntary enlistment through public shaming, women's support of the war effort, through the Women's Patriotic Association, created more support for women's suffrage.

Literature Review

In the decades since the First and Second World War, an impressive scholarship on military history has developed in Canada. In this period, Canadian historians have paid great attention to how Canadians fought in the two World Wars, soldiers' wartime experiences, and how the war affected soldiers in the post war period.¹¹ These studies have traditionally presented the Canadian war effort as a unifying force in Canada and the war years as a time when Canada came together as a nation.¹² The portrayal of the First and Second World Wars as a unifying force paves over class, ethnic, and gendered tensions on the home front that were exacerbated by the war and generally ignores three issues in particular: French Canadian opposition to the wars, labour unrest, and the suffrage movement.

One of the earliest works to focus on the home front experience was Donald Avery's *Dangerous Foreigners: European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932*. In this book, Avery shows that there was tension in Canada between the labour needs of war-related industries and the government's desire to rid the Dominion of "enemy aliens."¹³ In 1915, the persecution of foreign born workers led to threats of strike

¹¹ For some prominent examples see: G.W.L Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1918* (Ottawa: Queens Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1962); Tim Cook, *At the Sharp End: Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1914 1916* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2009); and Tim Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1917-1918* (Toronto: Viking, 2009).

¹² See: Pierre Berton, *Vimy*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986; Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House, 1993); and J.L. Granatstein and Desmond Morton, *Canada and the Two World Wars* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2003).

¹³ Donald Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners: European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), 67-68.

action in Alberta and British Columbia when mining companies refused to dismiss all those labelled as enemy aliens. By 1917, conscription in Canada led to a shortage of 100,000 workers for war-related industries, and companies began to actively seek out enemy aliens to fill these positions. Avery's work is a clear example of the importance of incorporating an understanding of both class and ethnicity on the Canadian home front. Furthermore, Avery shows the ability of war to change constructions of ethnicity on the home front as in the case of certain ethnic groups who the Canadian government encouraged to immigrate between 1869 and 1914 but deemed them to be undesirable after the war started.¹⁴

In his *Death So Noble: Memory and Meaning and the First World War*, Jonathan Vance also challenges the notion that the war united Canadians across the country. Vance argues that for indigenous people, French Canadians, and new Canadians, the transformative rhetoric that surrounded the war effort failed to materialize in the interwar period. Instead of creating one nationalism, Vance suggests the war strengthened Canada's two nationalisms: French and English. Furthermore, he also points out that in the post-war period many Canadians remembered the war in vastly different ways. Among academics, protestant churches, and artists a narrative emerged that described the war as a senseless slaughter. Those who believed this narrative worried that the romanticized myth of the Great War as a much a threat to peace as the fascism of the 1930's. The memory of the war in much the more widely consumed popular culture, on the other hand, was drastically

¹⁴ Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*, 37, 69.

different. Many producers and consumers of popular culture remembered the war as a necessary sacrifice to make the world a better place.¹⁵

Perhaps the most in depth examination of the Canadian home front is Jeff Keshen's 2007 book, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War*. In this book, Keshen challenges former narratives that the Second World War was indeed a "good war," in which Canadians united to support the war effort. Keshen examines the tensions of class and gender that crystalized on the home front in the form of food rationing, price control, women's employment in the military and civilian war industry, and wartime panic over moral decay.¹⁶

In his introduction, Keshen explains that the majority of Canadian social-military history has examined elements of the home front (women, organized labour, and returning servicemen) in isolation.¹⁷ *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers* fills this gap in Canadian historiography by providing a national narrative that unites gender, class, and ethnicity on the home front. His work is situated within a British and American literature that seeks to show how the war could foster Progressive views within society but could also create conservative reactions to perceived moral degradation.¹⁸ Despite Keshen's illuminating

¹⁵ Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory and Meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1997), 6-10, 258-260.

¹⁶ Jeff Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 4-6.

¹⁷ Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, 9.

¹⁸ See: John Costello, *Love, Sex and War: Changing Values, 1939-1945* (London: Collins, 1985); John Costello, *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed our Social and Sexual Attitudes* (Boston: Little Brown, 1985); Richard Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On?* (New York: Putman, 1970); Geoffrey Perett, *Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph: The American People, 1939-1945* (New York: Coward, McGann, and Geoghegan, 1973); and Richard Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1972).

examination of the Canadian home front in the Second World War, there has been no comprehensive examination of the Canadian home front during the First World War. As Keshen points out, Canadian historiography on this subject has been divided into books and articles that deal with specific issues such as the labour movement, constructions of gender, the persecution of enemy aliens, censorship, and the rehabilitation of returning veterans.

A recent treatment of the subject of enemy aliens is Bohdan Kordan's *No Free Man: Canada, The Great War, and the Enemy Alien Experience*. In this survey, Kordan focuses on government decision making and the impact these decisions had on the lives of German and Ukrainian Canadians who the government designated as "enemy aliens."¹⁹ While Kordan's examination of the wartime experience of German and Ukrainian Canadians is incredibly detailed, he leaves room for further analysis on wartime discussions on belonging and citizenship as both citizens and the state redefined various non-European ethnicities as either desirable or undesirable.

There are two prominent works that examine gender in Canada during the First World War. Mark Moss' *Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War* examines the impact that the war had on concepts of British masculinity in Ontario. He suggests that before and during the First World War, masculinity was consciously redefined through school, church, literature, sport, youth groups, and toys.²⁰ According to

¹⁹ Bodhan Kordan, *No Free Man: Canada, The Great War, and the Enemy Alien Experience* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2016), 9-10.

²⁰ Mark Moss, *Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001),

Moss, this new form of masculinity portrayed war in a romantic light and emphasized that combat was the ultimate test of masculinity.

In *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls in Canada, During the First World War*, Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw edited a collection of essays designed to provide insight into the wartime experiences of women and girls. These essays cover topics including women's responses and support for the war effort, debates over women's involvement of war-related industries, and the impact of the war on families. In their conclusion, Glassford and Shaw admit their collection is meant to serve as a starting point for the examination of Canadian and Newfoundland women and girls in the First World War and suggest that there is much work to be done in understanding the relationship between gender, class, race, age, religion, and region on the Canadian and Newfoundland home front.²¹

The majority of works that have examined class on the Canadian home front view wartime social conditions as a precursor to the Winnipeg General Strike or the strike wave of 1919. In *Confrontation at Winnipeg*, David Bercuson suggests that wartime inflation and conscription exacerbated tensions between the labour movement, employers, and the federal government in western Canada. Bercuson's argument is within the realm of "western exceptionalism," which posits that the strike was largely the result of conditions specific to western Canada. Bercuson explains that in the eyes of the majority of men in the labour movement, the war was a capitalist endeavor, fought at the expense of the working class. Organized workers disliked the state forcing them to produce for the war

²¹ Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw, *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls in Canada, During the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 316.

effort at the expense of the labour movement, but it was completely intolerable to be conscripted into fighting for the capitalists.²²

Unlike Bercuson, Gregory Kealey argues in “1919 Canada’s Labour Revolt” that the labour unrest that led to the Winnipeg General Strike was not unique to western Canada but was present across all of Canada in the post war period. Kealey argues that the First World War did not cause labour unrest in Canada but simply acted as a spark that ignited tensions caused by “underlying structural changes in capitalist organizations, both on a national and international scale.” Kealey shows that this labour unrest was present across Canada, albeit at different levels.²³

While British and Canadian historiography have taken many similar directions, they have largely evolved as two separate and distinct literatures, focused on modern national boundaries. An early examination of the British home front is Jay Winter’s *The Great War and the British People*. In order to break down the barrier between the front lines and the home front, Winter examines the impact of the war on the whole of British society. Winter’s primary argument is that two factors caused social and demographic change during the war. First was the large-scale recruitment, injury, and death of British men. Second was the mobilization of the civilian economy in support of the war effort. He argues that these two factors made the war an event of unprecedented death and suffering but also of improvement in the life expectancy of the population.²⁴

²² David Bercuson, *Confrontation at Winnipeg* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1974), 34-41.

²³ Gregory Kealey, “1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt,” *Labour:Le Travail* 13 (Spring 1984), 11-44.

²⁴ Jay Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 2-4.

A more recent examination of the British home front is Adrian Gregory's *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War*. Gregory's work is detailed and contains thematic chapters which examine British reactions to the war, the role of propaganda on the home front, volunteerism, the language of sacrifice, the role of religion, labour, and the aftermath of the war. A theme that is present throughout these chapters is the British people predominately viewed the war as a necessary sacrifice to create a better world by stopping German aggression.²⁵ While Winter and Gregory focus on the Britain, their conclusions serve as an excellent starting point for any historian seeking to understand the home front in other parts of the British Empire.

British historians have paid extensive attention to the subject of gender on the home front. A prominent debate is about the extent to which the First World War changed British conceptions of gender. In *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain*, Susan Kent argues that, following the war, British society redrew the ideology of "separate spheres" for men and women, providing new spaces for women in public life in hopes of preventing another war.²⁶ Similarly, in *The Blood of Our Sons: Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of Citizenship During the Great War*, Nicoletta Gullace shows that during the war women undermined the idea that citizenship was linked to gender. She argues that the prime criteria for citizenship during the war shifted from masculinity, majority, and property to service, patriotism, and British blood.²⁷ Both Kent and Gullace

²⁵ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 295-296.

²⁶ Susan Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 141.

²⁷ Nicoletta Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons, Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 3-4, 119.

agree that there was a profound restructuring of gender following the social upheaval of the First World War.

Lois Bibbings' *Telling Tales about Men: Conceptions of Conscientious Objectors to Military Service and the First World War* also shares some similarities with the works of Kent and Gullace. While Bibbings does not make a specific argument about the restructuring of gender, she shows that concepts of masculinity were particularly malleable during the war. Her chapters on various conceptions of conscientious objectors argue that, during the war, military service grew to be the defining characteristic of idealized British masculinity. Thus, people often described conscientious objectors as weak, unmanly, effeminate, unattractive, or homosexual.²⁸

While these three books make a strong case for the restructuring of both masculinity and femininity by the experience of war, not all historians accept the argument. In *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War*, Susan Grayzel takes issue with the thesis that the First World War caused changes in perceptions of gender. In her introduction, Grayzel specifically challenges Kent's argument about the restructuring of gender after the war. According to Grayzel, the war had a far more conservative impact on gender in Britain than Kent would allow. She suggests that even though the war offered more opportunities for women to work, large parts of the British public viewed women's work with suspicion and hostility. Furthermore,

²⁸ Lois Bibbings, *Telling Tales about Men: Conceptions of Conscientious Objectors to Military Service During the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 89, 103-104.

she argues that the war restricted women's freedom by emphasizing women's societal roles as wives, girlfriends, and mothers.²⁹

Deborah Cohen's *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939* covers the care of returning British soldiers in depth. In this book, Cohen suggests that in Britain the care of wounded veterans was a negotiation between citizens, the state, and volunteer organizations. She argues that British civil servants sought to limit the government's obligations to British veterans and left their care to a host of philanthropists and charitable organizations.³⁰ Cohen also makes the case that while Britain offered meagre support to its veterans when compared to Germany, the heavy involvement of civilian organizations in Britain brought together the veterans and those they fought for, while shielding the state from veterans' anger.³¹

As a former British Dominion, and a current province of Canada, the history of Newfoundland and Labrador lies somewhere between British and Canadian historiography. In British and Canadian literature, Newfoundland receives, at best, a brief mention. At worst, historians have left it out of the literature. It has been largely left up to historians of Newfoundland and Labrador to examine Newfoundland's military past. Due to the impact of Canadian and American base construction, the Second World War makes up the majority of the literature.³²

²⁹ Susan Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 5-6, 49.

³⁰ Deborah Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 4, 189.

³¹ Cohen, *The War Come Home*, 189.

³² For some prominent examples see: Gerald Nicholson, *More Fighting Newfoundlanders: A History of Newfoundland's Fighting Forces in the Second World War* (St. John's: Government of

While many non-academic historians have written about the First World War and the Battle of Beaumont Hamel, there have been far fewer academic inquiries into the First World War. Most academic studies have focused on the Newfoundland Regiment's activities at home and overseas.³³ This is likely due to the dominant position the experience of the Newfoundland Regiment at the Battle of Beaumont Hamel has held in Newfoundland and Labrador's collective memory of the war.³⁴ Far less attention has been paid to the Newfoundland home front. To date, there has been no comprehensive examination of how the war impacted the majority of Newfoundlanders, those who remained home during the war. Like the Canadian historiography, there have been various books and articles which examine specific aspects of life on the home front.

In 2001, Mike O'Brien examined how the war impacted class relations in Newfoundland in an article titled "Producers versus Profiteers: The Politics of Class in

Newfoundland and Labrador, 1969); Peter Neary, *A Garrison Country: Newfoundland and Labrador During the Second World War* (Ottawa: Canadian War Museum, 1999), and *Newfoundland and the North Atlantic World 1929-1949* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996); and Steve High, editor, *Occupied St. John's: A Social History of a City at War* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2010).

³³ See: Gerald Nicholson, *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment* (St. John's: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1964); Whitney Lackenbauer, "Baptism by Ottoman Fire: Newfoundland, Memory, and the Gallipoli Campaign," in Mehdi Ilhan, ed. *Gallipoli: History, Memory and National Imagination* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu 2014); Chris Martin, "The Right Course, The Best Course, The Newfoundland Course: Voluntary Recruitment in the Newfoundland Regiment, 1914-1918," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 24, no.1 (2009):1719-1726; Mike O'Brien, "Out of a Clear Sky: The Mobilization of the Newfoundland Regiment 1914-1915," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 22, no. 2, (2007): 401-427; and Patricia O'Brien, "The Newfoundland Patriotic Association: The Administration of the War Effort 1914-1918." Master's Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1981.

³⁴ James Baker, "As Loved Our Fathers: The Strength of Patriotism among Young Newfoundlanders," *National Identities* 14, no. 4, (2012): 381-382; Whitney Lackenbauer, "War, Memory, and the Newfoundland Regiment at Gallipoli," *Newfoundland Studies* 15 no. 2 (Fall 1999). 176-214; and Robert Harding, "Glorious Tragedy: Newfoundland's Cultural Memory and the Attack at Beaumont Hamel, 1916-1925," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 21, no. 1, (2006), 3-40.

Newfoundland During the First World War.” He argues that a rhetoric of democracy and freedom gave producing-class Newfoundlanders a better opportunity to advance their interests. He suggests that the war created conditions that allowed both rural fishermen and urban wage labourers to unite and advocate for their mutual interest.³⁵

Sean Cadigan’s *Death on Two Fronts: National Tragedies and the Fate of Democracy in Newfoundland, 1914-1934* is vital to understanding class and masculinity in Newfoundland during the war. His argument that the 1914 Sealing Disaster brought class dialogue to an unprecedented prominence in Newfoundland politics is critical to any researcher utilizing newspapers from this period. Furthermore, Cadigan’s examination of William Coaker clearly shows the impact of the war on class dialogue as Coaker reined in his class-based language and adopted the language of patriotism in his speeches and writings. Cadigan’s work also shows a transformation of masculinity during the war and the post war period. He explains that following the sealing disaster, Coaker argued for more state intervention in the sealing industry to protect sealers and expanded on his calls for state invention during the war. In the post war period, however, the image of the masculine sealer was recast and a new image was created of the hardy masculine sealer, who “would rather die than yield independence by asking the Government for relief.”³⁶ The debate

³⁵ Mike O’Brien “Producers versus Profiteers: The Politics of Class in Newfoundland During the First World War,” *Acadiensis* 40, no. 1, (2001): 69.

³⁶ Sean Cadigan, *Death on Two Fronts: National Tragedies and the Fate of Democracy in Newfoundland, 1914-1934* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2013), 301-311. Cadigan draws on James Overton, “Economic Crisis and the End of Democracy: Politics in Newfoundland During the Great Depression,” *Labour Le/Travail* 26 (Fall 1990): 85-124, and Gene Long, *Suspended State: Newfoundland Before Canada* (St. John’s: Breakwater Books, 1999).

between Edward Morris' Liberalism and Coaker's Progressivism is clear evidence of the renegotiation of concepts of class and gender in wartime Newfoundland.

The only author to examine ethnicity in Newfoundland during the First World War, is Gerhard Bassler in a chapter titled "'I Have with Great Patience Withstood Many Insults;': The Enemy Alien Experience, 1914-1918," from his book *From Vikings to U-Boats: The German Experience in Newfoundland and Labrador*. Bassler shows that, prior to the war, Newfoundland had a positive view of German people and German culture. However, shortly after the beginning of the First World War, anti-German propaganda shattered this positive view.³⁷ Bassler's work highlights the power of warfare in reconstructing concepts of ethnicity as Newfoundlanders radically altered their conceptions of German ethnicity.

The two most influential examinations of gender on the Newfoundland home front are Margot Duley's "Unquiet Knitters of Newfoundland: From Mothers of the Regiment, to Mothers of the Nation" and Terry Bishop-Stirling's "Such Sights One Will Never Forget: Newfoundland Women and Overseas Nursing in the First World War," in Glassford and Shaw's edited *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service*. Together, Duley and Bishop-Stirling show that, during the war, women in Newfoundland were keenly motivated to provide service to the British Empire whether it was on the home front or the front lines.³⁸ They clearly show that women who served on the home front or the front lines

³⁷ Gerhard Bassler, *From Vikings to U-boats: The German Experience in Newfoundland and Labrador* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2006), 139.

³⁸ Margot Duley, "Unquiet Knitters of Newfoundland: From Mothers of the Regiment, to Mothers of the Nation," and Terry Bishop-Sterling, "Such Sights One Will Never Forget: Newfoundland Women and Overseas Nursing in the First World War," in *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service*:

began by supporting the male soldiers, then asserted themselves in Newfoundland society, and attained full citizenship in the Dominion.³⁹

Theoretical Framework

Drawing from feminist, critical race, and class historiography, my goal is to understand how the wartime social covenant struck between citizens and the state transformed the liberal order in Newfoundland. My understandings of liberalism and the liberal order are derived from the works of Fernande Roy, Ian McKay, Jean-François Constant, and Michel Ducharme. In addition to these works, I draw on material from Canadian history that provide me with a deeper understanding of gender, ethnicity, and class, which is vital to understanding changing liberal concepts of the individual and individual rights and responsibilities.

My theoretical framework draws on Joy Parr's theory that ideals of gender, class, and ethnicity are interconnected and vary dynamically over time and space, altering the lived experience of everyday citizens.⁴⁰ I will apply Parr's theory to the First World War, showing that the war effort in Newfoundland was a key period for reconceiving ethnicity, class, and gender. In doing so, I will be building on the work of Nicoletta Gullace, who argues that during the war, British men and women renegotiated concepts of citizenship along gender lines. I will heavily borrow from her thesis that during the war the prime

Women and Girls of Newfoundland and Canada During the First World War, ed. Sarah Glassford, and Amy Shaw (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 51, 126.

³⁹ Duley, "The Unquiet Knitters of Newfoundland," 51.

⁴⁰ Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

criteria for citizenship shifted from masculinity and property ownership to patriotism, British blood and national service.⁴¹

In addition to these works from British and Canadian historiography, my theoretical framework will also rely on works within the historiography of Newfoundland. Willeen Keough's article "Contested Terrains: Ethnic and Gendered Spaces in the Harbour Grace Affray," from the *Canadian Historical Review*, heavily influenced my research. In this article, Keough argues that ethnicity, gender, and class in Newfoundland were defined by adaptation of European myths and narratives.⁴² When applied to the First World War, this thesis suggests that the Newfoundlanders' feelings about the war would be similar to that of the British Empire but reinterpreted to fit a colonial context.

Similarly, in "Race, Gender, Class and Colonial Nationalism: Railway Development in Newfoundland, 1881-1898," Kurt Korneski argues that many people in Newfoundland supported railway development because they believed it would allow them to live up to ideals of masculinity, whiteness, and class that existed in the British Isles.⁴³ I will borrow from Korneski's approach as I view the war effort in Newfoundland as an attempt by the government and the people of Newfoundland to live up to changing concepts of gender, ethnicity, and class in the British Empire

⁴¹ Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons*, 3.

⁴² Willeen Keough, "Contested Terrains: Ethnic and Gendered Spaces in the Harbour Grace Affray." *Canadian Historical Review* 90, No. 1 (2009): 70.

⁴³ Kurt Korneski, "Race, Gender, Class and Colonial Nationalism: Railway Development in Newfoundland, 1881-1898." *Labour Le/Travail* 62 (Fall 2008): 81.

Significance of Thesis

My dissertation will make a significant contribution to the historiographies of Newfoundland, Britain, and Canada. As I have shown above, the majority of scholarly research into the home front examines constructions of class, ethnicity, and gender as separate phenomena. Like Keshen's *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, I will add to Canadian, British, and Newfoundland historiographies by examining the Newfoundland home front as a whole. This research will shed light on the lived experience of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as concepts of class, ethnicity, and gender augmented the liberal state to create a new relationship between citizens and the state that was crucial to the war effort. This relationship was characterized by an expectation that civilians make sacrifices for the state in return for greater protections from adverse conditions created by the war effort.

While several historians have taken multiple approaches in answering Ian McKay's call for an examination of the Liberal order in Canada, none have thoroughly examined the period that he refers to as the passive revolution. Ian McKay argues that between 1900 and 1940, liberalism underwent a series of compromises to maintain hegemony. I will argue that this revolution was anything but passive. My work shows that the alterations that occurred to the liberal order in Newfoundland were the result of a protracted negotiation of a new social covenant between citizens of all genders, ethnicities, and classes and the Newfoundland government. The result of these negotiations so profoundly changed liberalism that it could hardly be considered classical liberalism and more closely resembled a burgeoning social liberalism that focused much more on the rights of the community than the rights of the individual.

My study will improve our knowledge about the relationship between global conflict and changing understandings of governance at home, which is especially important amid debates over Bill C-24 and the ability of the government to revoke Canadian citizenship. The role of global conflict as a catalyst for transforming concepts of governance has been underestimated, and the consequences of this neglect are felt today in Canadian and western societies. Therefore, studying the past is necessary to provide the basis for informed decision-making and a functioning democracy. This study will examine the interaction between ideals of gender, class, ethnicity, and the obligations of British citizens in a liberal democracy. It will establish if the revaluation of these ideals during the First World War, acted as a catalyst for change in conceptions of citizenship. The Newfoundland case provides a unique perspective into the history of liberalism in the British Empire. Its limited population, geographic size, and close ties to Britain provide a unique opportunity to examine how the war altered concepts of gender, class, and ethnicity and resulted in changes to the operation of the liberal state.

Chapter Outline

I have divided my research into six separate chapters, which will cover case studies of social issues that arose during the war. In the first chapter, I will turn to prohibition in Newfoundland, discussing how changing wartime notions of patriotism and a gendered and class-based citizenship were fundamental to the implementation of a strict prohibition of alcohol. In the second chapter, I will study how competing class interests and notions of patriotism affected food rationing and price controls. This section will explore how the government balanced the needs of the war effort and the quality of life expected by British

citizens. In the third chapter, I will study the competing class interests that arose during discussion of profits and income taxation that the government intended to fund the war effort. These conversations drastically altered perceptions of what citizens, of a certain class, owed their government. In the fourth chapter, I will explore how nativism and racism emerged in popular understandings of citizenship in the Dominion as the war changed notions of “race” and “belonging.” This chapter will examine debates over and suspicion of Newfoundlanders of European descent, the Inuit in Labrador, and Syrian Christians⁴⁴ in St. John’s. In the fifth chapter, I will carry out a specific case study of how the war caused citizens to re-evaluate British ideals of femininity and masculinity, which led to a campaign of public shaming for men who did not volunteer. In the sixth chapter I will examine the system of conscription that arose when recruiters believed that men failed to fulfill their masculine duties. In the seventh chapter, I will study how women’s war work redefined gender in the post war period and dramatically increased support for women’s suffrage.

Newfoundland: A Background

This dissertation will primarily focus on the island portion of the Dominion of Newfoundland. While the Dominion comprised the island of Newfoundland and the mainland portion of Labrador, a limited historical record made it difficult to do a comprehensive examination of the impact of the war on Labrador. Despite this, Labrador is discussed where sources were available. To clarify terminology, I will be using three major terms to refer to Newfoundland. When I use the term “Newfoundland,” it refers

⁴⁴ This group of people were referred to variously as Syrians, Assyrians, Lebanese, or Turks.

specifically to the island of Newfoundland. The term “Dominion of Newfoundland” encompasses Newfoundland and Labrador.

This dissertation is an examination of how the war changed the relationship between citizens on the home front and the liberal government of Newfoundland. While this paper will examine the recruiting of and conscription for the Newfoundland Regiment, it will not go into detail about the activities of the Newfoundland Regiment and their fighting overseas. The treatment and care of returning soldiers will not be discussed in this dissertation. This topic falls outside the temporal period of this paper as the debates over the care for veterans began during the war but continued long after the war ended. This topic deserves its own examination.

In 1914, the economy in Newfoundland was much as it had been for hundreds of years: the exploitation of Newfoundland’s cod stocks was the primary industry for the Dominion, providing the livelihood for the majority of Newfoundlanders. Fishermen across the island caught, salted, and dried split cod-fish for export to markets in Spain, the Caribbean, Greece, Italy, and most importantly in the pre-war period, Portugal. The success of Newfoundland’s fisheries were dependent not only on the quantity of fish and the quality of the cure but also fickle international markets and the politics that influenced them. International conflicts, trade barriers, local politics, and competitors like Norway and France had profound impacts on the economic success of Newfoundland for better and often for worse.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Shannon Ryan, *Fish Out of Water: The Newfoundland Salt Fish Trade, 1814-1914* (St. John’s, Breakwater, 1986), 236.

A major characteristic of Newfoundland's fisheries was a credit system called "truck." Truck entailed merchants' issuing credit at the beginning of the season so fishermen could outfit themselves for the coming season with food, clothing, and most importantly fishing supplies. At the end of the season, Merchants would grade the fish, determine the price, and then weigh the fisherman's debts against the value of his fish. While the truck system allowed fishermen to obtain goods they could not otherwise afford, it often resulted in a cycle of debt when fishermen did not catch enough fish to pay off their debt. By controlling both the price of the fish and the price of fishing supplies, merchants were often able to overcharge for supplies and underpay for fish, leaving fishermen with little left at the end of the season.

In addition to the fishery, many people relied on other sources of income to make ends meet. The lumber industry was supported by Liberal Premier Robert Bond, who viewed logging as part of the development of Newfoundland's interior, which started with the railway construction in the 1880's and 1890's. Bond hoped that railway development would lead to the development of rich resources in Newfoundland's interior, resulting in a diversified economy. Major developments in Newfoundland's pulp and paper industry occurred between 1909 and 1911 when Alfred Harmsworth, a British newspaper financier, and Albert E. Reed, a British paper manufacturer, established pulp and paper mills at Grand Falls and Bishop Falls. By 1914, logging represented over 14% of the Dominion's exports and offered a winter income for many fishermen.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ James Hiller, "The Origins of Pulp and Paper in Newfoundland," *Acadiensis* 11, Vol. 2 (Spring 1982), 42.

Sealing was another important source of income, providing the people of Newfoundland with support during the spring, before the fishery began. Since the 18th century, fishermen had harvested seals for their pelts and fat. Seal fat was a valuable commodity and was the primary reason for the seal harvest. It was rendered to produce oil that was used for lighting, lubrication, and for the manufacture of products like margarine and paint. In addition to the fat, fishermen harvested seal pelts. It would be used to make clothing. Seal meat was not a large part of Newfoundland's diet, though in some areas people considered seal flippers a delicacy.⁴⁷

Compared to the cod fishery, the seal fishery was far more dangerous. Disaster twice struck the sealing fleet in March and April of 1914, four months before the war began. The first incident involved two vessels, the *Stephano* and *Newfoundland*, captained by the infamous Abram Kean and his son Westbury Kean, respectively.⁴⁸ As a result of a miscommunication and poor decision making by Abram and Westbury, 132 sealers from the *Newfoundland* were left stranded on the ice between 31 March and 2 April during a terrible storm, resulting in the deaths of 77 men. Meanwhile, during the same storm that killed the men from the *Newfoundland*, the *Southern Cross* sank off the coast of Newfoundland somewhere between Cape Pine and Cape Race, resulting in the deaths of all 173 crew. Together these disasters resulted in the deaths of 251 men, highlighting just how dangerous the seal hunt could be.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ For more on the history of the seal hunt in Newfoundland see: Shannon Ryan, *The Ice Hunters: A History of Newfoundland Sealing to 1914* (St. John's: Breakwater), 1994.

⁴⁸ Abram Kean was a very well-known sealing captain. He is best known for his role in the Sealing Disaster.

⁴⁹ For more on the sealing disaster see: Cadigan, *Death on Two Fronts*.

In addition to fishing, logging, and the seal hunt, Newfoundlanders relied on other sources of income to make a seasonal cycle of employment. Mining was another form of employment in this period. Mining operations started in the mid-19th century. By the beginning of the twentieth century mines were operating in Tilt Cove, Terra Nova, Bett's Cove, Little Bay, Pilley's Island, and most importantly Bell Island. These mines exploited deposits of copper, pyrite, iron ore, and small amounts of gold. Mining provided lucrative income for residents of northeastern Newfoundland and Bell Island. To supplement these more formal forms of employment, people across the island also earned additional money by raising livestock, growing vegetables, and fishing for salmon.

Though the Dominion had food resources in the form of cod and salmon, the island was always reliant on food imports. As a result of receding glaciers approximately 10,000 years ago, Newfoundland has very little fertile soil. Approximately one third of the island has no soil at all, and only very small pockets of land have enough fertile soil for growing crops.⁵⁰ Therefore, though residents often augmented their diets by raising sheep, cows, and growing vegetables, the island was never able to sustain enough livestock and crops to support the population. As a result, the residents of Newfoundland relied on imports of salt pork, beef, flour, tea, molasses, sugar, butter, oatmeal, peas, hops, malt, beer, wine, brandy, and tobacco to sustain themselves.⁵¹ The inability to provide sufficient food for its settler

⁵⁰ Sean Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 7.

⁵¹ John Mannion, "Victualling the Fishery: Newfoundland Diet and the Origins of the Irish Provisions Trade, 1675-1700," *International Journal of Maritime History* 12, No. 1 (June 2000): 8.

population was a defining element of Newfoundland throughout its history and would become a source of great anxiety during the war.

In 1914, Newfoundland was a Dominion in the British Empire with Responsible Government. The government comprised an elected House of Assembly (lower house) of 36 seats that came from 18 districts across the island. Whichever party held the majority of seats in the House of Assembly formed a government, and the governor appointed members of the elected government to an Executive Council (cabinet) to form government policy. The Legislative Council (upper house) consisted of 24 members appointed by the Prime Minister. The House of Assembly drafted, voted on, and passed legislation and sent it to the Legislative Council, where the Council could bill could pass, amend, or reject bills. If the Legislative Council amended the bill, they would send it back to the House of Assembly for approval.

The governor, as a representative of the British Crown, had several responsibilities in Newfoundland. Firstly, they appointed the Executive Council but took no role in their deliberation. The governor could also prorogue or dissolve parliament and call elections. Though Newfoundland was a Dominion, it was not wholly independent. As a British Dominion, the government was responsible for internal affairs but not for external affairs, which remained the responsibility of the Colonial Office in London. The governor had to send any bills passed by the Dominion government that may have affected external affairs, to the Colonial Office for approval before he could give them royal assent. The governor was also responsible for any official communications between the Newfoundland and British governments, which allowed him to offer their influential opinions on local politics. Alongside these governmental duties, the governor also filled many ceremonial duties as a

figurehead for the Crown. The Governor of Newfoundland for most of the war was Walter Edward Davidson. In September of 1917, when the British government reassigned Davidson to a post as the governor of New South Wales, Charles Alexander Harris replaced him.

Three major parties dominated politics in 1914: The Liberal Party, the People's Party, and the Fishermen's Protective Union. The oldest of these parties was the Liberal Party, formed in 1887, by former Premier William Whiteway. Born in Devon, Whiteway moved to Newfoundland in 1843 and worked as a lawyer. He formed his first government in 1878 as the leader of the Conservative Party. He lost an election to Robert Thorburn's Reform party in 1885 and took a two-year hiatus from politics. In 1887, at the request of Robert Bond and Alfred Morine, William Whiteway formed a revived Liberal Party.⁵² The primary goal of Whiteway's new Liberal party was to complete the railway that Whiteway had worked towards during his time as leader of the Conservative Party and develop Newfoundland's interior resources. Whiteway won elections in 1889 and 1895. In 1897, however, Whiteway's Liberal Party lost to James Winter Spearman, the leader of the Tory Party. After this loss, Whiteway retired from politics, and Robert Bond took control of the Liberal Party in 1899.

Bond, born in St. John's, was a wealthy man for his entire adult life, as his father left him a substantial amount of money in his will, which Bond used to start his own businesses. Bond's popularity in Newfoundland stemmed from his vocal opposition to the

⁵² Alfred Morine, born in Nova Scotia, was a well-known lawyer, newspaper editor, and politician in Newfoundland. During his political career he held several high ranking positions including Colonial Secretary, and sitting on the Legislative Council.

1897 Reid Contract, which had caused outrage across the island.⁵³ In exchange for the construction of a railway across Newfoundland, the Reid Newfoundland Company was given unprecedented compensation and influence in Newfoundland, including: a right to run the railway for 50 years and then own it; millions of acres in land grants; the purchase of the dry dock in St. John's; the operation of eight coastal steamers, the development of Newfoundland's first hydroelectric company, and more. As a result, in the 1900 election, Bond won an election against Spearman, winning 32 out of 36 seats in the house. Bond's time as Premier and later Prime Minister, when Newfoundland achieved Dominion Status, was characterized by three major issues: the settling of the French shore issue in 1904, the development of a pulp and paper mill in Grand Falls, and a narrowly achieved reciprocity deal with the United States that was eventually vetoed by Britain on Canada's request.⁵⁴ Both these issues made Bond seem like a strong leader, who stood up for Newfoundland. This persona won him two more elections in 1904 and 1908.

Another major party was Edward Morris's People's Party. Born in St. John's, Morris was the son of an Irish born cooper. Morris first entered politics in 1885 when he ran in a general election as an independent, campaigning door to door, promoting himself as a champion of the downtrodden, and winning a seat as a member for St. John's West.⁵⁵ When Whiteway, Bond, and Morine reinvigorated the Liberal party in 1887, Morris joined

⁵³ S.J.R. Noel, *Politics in Newfoundland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971).

⁵⁴ Melvin Baker and Peter Neary, "Bond, Sir Robert," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003

⁵⁵ James K. Hiller, "Morris, Edward Patrick, 1st Baron Morris," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 16, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003—, accessed September 23, 2019,

their party for the 1889 election. After their victory in this election, Whiteway appointed Morris to the Executive Council.⁵⁶

In 1908, Morris split from Bond's Liberal Party and announced the formation of his People's Party. This announcement was timed to coincide with the arrival of many sealers from the ice, ensuring that the news spread rapidly through rural Newfoundland. In the manifesto of the People's Party, Morris committed himself to liberalism and branded himself as an alternative to Bond's Liberals. While he tried to promise something to every Newfoundlander, he was not radical and his brand of Liberalism was much the same as mainline parties in Canada and the United States.⁵⁷ The 1908 election resulted in a tie between Bond and Morris, with each of the winning 18 seats. In the next election in 1909, Morris achieved a majority government winning 26 out of 36 seats in the House of Assembly.

The final party to dominate politics during the war years was the Fisherman's Protective Union (FPU). After its formation in 1908, William Coaker, who was born and educated in St. John's, led the FPU. The original goal of the Union was to ensure that fishermen got a fair share of the wealth that their labour produced. Initially the FPU intended not to get directly involved in politics but to support whichever party best supported the goals of the FPU. Most of the initial efforts of the FPU were focused on reforming the way that fishermen sold their fish to merchants, including demands for government intervention to ensure the fair grading of fish.⁵⁸ Despite their desire to remain

⁵⁶ James K. Hiller, "Morris, Edward Patrick, 1st Baron Morris," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 16, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003—, accessed September 23, 2019,

⁵⁷ Noel, *Politics in Newfoundland*, 57-58.

⁵⁸ Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador: A History*, 179.

politically neutral, William Coaker believed that in order to secure fishery reforms, the FPU would have to become politically active, and the Union Party was formed. It ran for the first time as a party in the 1913 election.

During the 1913, election, Coaker formed an uneasy alliance with Robert Bond's Liberals. Coaker believed that political alliances were necessary for the FPU to pass any of their political goals such as fisheries regulations, old age pensions, reduced tariffs, and a legislative change that would allow unpopular M.H.A.s to be recalled. The result of the 1913 election, which would be the last election until 1919, was a majority for Morris' People's Party. Morris won 21 seats, Bond won seven, and Coaker took eight seats. The geographical divide in support between the Liberal-Union coalition and the People's Party is worth noting. Morris was most popular in areas with large populations of Catholics (Ferryland, Harbour Main, Placentia, and St. Mary's), the south, and southwest (Burin, Burgeo, La Poile, Fortune, St. George's, and most of St. John's.) The Liberal-Union coalition, however, won all seats from the northern districts of St. Barbe, Twillingate, Fogo, Bonavista, and Trinity. With Morris having support of the South and Bond/Coaker having support of the North, the district of Conception Bay North ultimately decided the election, returning five seats for the People's Party.⁵⁹

The outcome of this election was devastating for Robert Bond. He resigned his leadership of the Liberal party and would never return to politics. J.M. Kent, a lawyer and M.H.A. for St. John's East, took over leadership of the Liberal Party. He would remain the

⁵⁹ Noel, *Politics in Newfoundland*, 112-114.

leader of the party until 1916, when Kent was appointed to the Supreme Court and W.F. Lloyd, the English born M.H.A for Trinity Bay, became leader.

For most of the war, politics in Newfoundland was dominated by two major factions. Morris and his People's Party were classically Liberal in orientation. They believed that social problems were the individual's responsibility and the only assistance afforded to them should come in the form of charity. They also believed in laissez faire economics and that the government had no right to interfere in free markets. On the other side of this political contest was the Progressive William Coaker. Coaker firmly believed that social problems were the responsibility of the state and that the state had an obligation regulate markets to ensure that producers earned a greater share from their labour. In many ways, while the British Empire was fighting the Germans on the front lines, the Progressives were fighting Liberals on the home front.⁶⁰

At the outset of the First World War, Newfoundland had very few established military forces. Since the 18th century, the colony was the host to several iterations of the Newfoundland Regiment including: The Royal Newfoundland Regiment of Foot (1795-1802); the Royal Newfoundland Fencible Infantry (1803-1816); and the Royal Newfoundland Companies (1824-1862). While these infantry regiments had existed in Newfoundland since the 18th century, when each Regiment disbanded, it left little behind

⁶⁰ In this paper I use the term producer and producing class to refer to "working class" Newfoundlanders. I have chosen to use the term producer, as opposed to working-class because the latter has traditionally been used to describe wage labourers in industrialized centers. Without large scale industrialized industry, the experience of producers in Newfoundland, the majority of whom were fishermen, vastly differs from the experience of working class Britons. The term producer and toiler were contemporary terms that referred to Newfoundland's working class.

for future regiments to build on. By 1870, the last British troops had left St. John's, and the defence of Newfoundland was left to the Royal Navy.

In 1899, the Newfoundland and British governments formed the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve (NRNR). The purpose of this reserve was to supply the Royal Navy with trained sailors from Newfoundland and provide rural Newfoundlanders with seasonal employment. By the time the war broke out, the Reserve had over 500 recruits. Despite the ample number of trained sailors, the only ship the NRNR possessed was the HMS Calypso, which was launched in 1883 and given to the NRNR in 1902. By 1914, the Calypso could no longer sail under its own power, was permanently moored in St. John's, and was used solely as a training vessel. It provided extremely limited defence for the island.⁶¹

When it came to a standing army, Newfoundland had no formal military establishment at the outset of the war. The closest thing the Dominion had to a military force were the various denominational cadet corps such as the Church Lads Brigades (Church of England); the Catholic Cadet Corps; the Methodist Guards; and the Presbyterian Highlanders. These corps taught young men and boys the basics of drill, physical fitness, marksmanship, and military discipline. Despite their military training, these cadet corps were never intended to take any role in combat operations. They would, however, eventually make up most of the recruits for the Newfoundland Regiment.

While this dissertation will examine the formation, recruitment, and eventual conscription of the soldiers and sailors of the Newfoundland Regiment and Naval Reserve, it does not discuss their combat operations while in Europe, the Mediterranean, and the

⁶¹ Michael Westcott, *Defending the Dominions: The Naval Defence of Newfoundland During the First World War*, Memorial University, MA Dissertation, 2013.

North Sea. For this reason, I have chosen to give a brief description of some of the major turning points for the Regiment and Reserve, as a background for the conditions on the home front.⁶²

The Dominion's first major casualties came from the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve. On 13 January 1915, 24 Newfoundlanders, stationed on the HMS *Viknor*, as part of the Royal Navy's 10th Cruiser Squadron, were killed when the *Viknor* sank off the coast of Ireland. It is not known why the *Viknor* sunk, but it is quite likely that it hit one of the many German mines set off the coast of Ireland. On 3 February, 22 more Newfoundland reservists died when the *Clan McNaughton*, a merchant marine vessel, went down in a heavy storm off the coast of Ireland. Tragedy struck a third time on 11 March 1915 when 11 reservists were killed on the HMS *Bayano* when it was torpedoed by a German U-Boat in the Northern Channel.

After their initial training in Newfoundland and further training in Scotland, the Newfoundland Regiment saw combat for the first time during their four months on the beaches of Gallipoli. The experience of the Newfoundland Regiment was characterized by mud, cold, and wetness. At the end of that four months and the failed attempt at holding Suvla beach, the Newfoundland Regiment helped to protect Australian and New Zealand soldiers as they retreated from the beaches. As a result of their actions at Gallipoli, 28 soldiers died and another 80 were wounded. While the Regiment's actions at Gallipoli received widespread press coverage, they were shortly overshadowed by the tremendous

⁶² For more on the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, and its activities overseas see: G.W.L. Nicholson, *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment* (Montreal: McGill Queens Press, 2006).

loss of life on the Western Front and was quickly absent from Newfoundland's cultural memory of the war.⁶³

The next significant event in the history of the Newfoundland Regiment sent shockwaves through the Newfoundland home front and would become the defining element of Newfoundland's participation in the war. On 1 July 1916, the Newfoundland Regiment, together with the Essex Regiment were ordered to take part in the first day of the Somme Offensive. Their goal was to charge a 500-meter section of no-mans-land and seize a section of German trench at Beaumont Hamel. After a prolonged artillery barrage on the German trenches, the Newfoundlanders left their trenches and faced a hail of machine gun fire. The attack was a complete failure and resulted in the death and injury of over 700 Newfoundlanders.

While the Newfoundland Regiment's first major engagements had been failures, they had many successes throughout the war. The Newfoundland Regiment earned high praise for their success at the battles of Gueudecourt (October 1916); Monchy-le-Preux (April 1917); Cambrai (November 1917); and others. For their valour in the field, the Newfoundland Regiment was issued the prefix Royal in December of 1917. By the end of the war over 6,000 soldiers enlisted with the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, 2,000 with the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve, 500 with the Newfoundland Forestry Battalion, and over 3,000 enlisted with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. While the total casualty rate is not known, over 1,300 Newfoundlanders lost their lives during the war. The service

⁶³ Tim Cook and Mark Humphries, "The Forgotten Campaign: Newfoundland at Gallipoli," *Canadian Military History* 27, No 1 (2018), 1-2.

and sacrifice of these soldiers was the driving force behind the politics, economics, and everyday life in wartime Newfoundland.

A Note on Sources

A large portion of the source material from this dissertation comprises news articles, editorials, and letters to the editor from daily newspapers. In order to ensure that my research represented the vast geographical and political landscape of the Dominion, I examined eight newspapers from both urban and rural Newfoundland. The editorial stances of these newspapers covered a wide range of political leanings.

The examination of daily newspapers provided me with a detailed understanding of Newfoundlander's public opinions on the war effort. Editorials, written by the editorial staff of a newspaper, are barometers for public opinion. Though these editors could conceivably publish anything they desired, the content of editorials always fell within a range of opinions that were acceptable to the readers of a particular newspaper. Doing otherwise would mean the failure of the newspaper as a business. Given the political nature of newspapers in Newfoundland, the editors of each newspaper generally had a clear political stance. Some newspapers, like the *Mail and Advocate*, were strongly Progressive in orientation and represented producers while others, such as the *Daily News*, were Liberal in orientation and represented the business class. Other newspapers, like the *Evening Telegram*, had varied political leanings as the editorial staff of the newspaper changed. Reading the back and forth of the editorials in various newspapers provided an invaluable understanding of how various political and socio-economic groups responded to the conditions of the war.

Letters to the editor also provide insight into public opinion as they represent the direct words of average citizens. When editors deviated from what was considered acceptable, they were often greeted by a flurry of letters to the editor that attacked any offending articles. Similarly, letters to the editor could also show when the readers of a newspaper strongly agreed with the stance of a particular article. In addition to responding to editorials, letters to the editor also provided a platform for citizens to express their support for, or opposition, to actions taken by the government or to start a discussion on topics they believed were important and were not being discussed in newspapers.

In *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Interwar Britain*, Adrian Bingham highlights the importance of using daily newspapers to gauge public opinion. Bingham champions the use of newspapers as a critical source because they lie somewhere between the realm of politics and popular culture. He argues that newspapers have the ability to reflect not only on political discourse but also on the realities of everyday life of citizens. Responding to the criticism that newspapers only represented the opinions of the business class at the expense of the producers, Bingham points out that working-class newspapers like the *Daily Herald* and *Daily Worker*, often had trouble securing advertising because of their unrelenting defense of left-wing politics and their working class readership.⁶⁴ While Progressive newspapers in Newfoundland did not have trouble obtaining advertising like their counterparts in Britain, the *Mail and Advocate*, *Plaindealer*, and the *Daily Star*, often found themselves subject to the ire of the business community and the government for its staunch defense of the producing class in Newfoundland.

⁶⁴ Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Interwar Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 7-9.

Similarly, in *A Kingdom United: Popular Response to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland*, Catriona Pennell highlights the importance of the utilization of newspapers as a source for determining popular opinion. Pennell acknowledges that newspapers can be biased and inaccurate, but she maintains that these flaws are greatly outweighed by their ability to shed light on public opinion. Importantly, Pennell argues that while newspapers sought to influence their readers, ultimately they were a business that sold a product to their consumers. By selling newspapers, editors were profoundly influenced by the opinions and beliefs of their readers. Given the relationship between newspaper editors and their readers, Pennell concludes that newspapers are an invaluable barometer for public opinion.⁶⁵

Like Pennell and Bingham, I have concluded that newspapers are a valuable source for gauging public opinion. I have mitigated the inherent flaws of newspaper sources by examining a host of papers from across the political spectrum and urban/rural divide. Without using these papers it would be impossible to understand the discourse that was occurred between citizens across the Dominion as the war progressed and both citizens and the government attempted to cope with the conditions on the home front.

⁶⁵ Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Response to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 6.

Chapter 1: Prohibition

Introduction

In Newfoundland, like the rest of the western world, the temperance movement began in the mid-19th century. The movement to prohibit the sale and consumption of alcohol was part of the wider moral reform movement, which was the result of a growing fear that a modern, industrialized society brought moral decay to the world. In *The Age of Light Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*, Mariana Valverde explains that the moral reform movement always focused on nation building, in which one group constructed a set of moral guidelines that they believed were necessary for the health and prosperity of the nation.⁶⁶ Therefore, from the beginning, the temperance movement was not just about the well-being of the individual but the health of the nation.

The international temperance movement crystalized in Newfoundland in several groups such as the Sons of Order of Temperance, the Methodist Standing Committee for Evangelism and Social Service, and most importantly, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). These organizations saw great successes in the 19th century. As a result of their activity, the House of Assembly passed the first Local Option legislation in 1870. This bill allowed for each district to decide whether or not merchants could sell alcohol within their borders. As a result, between 1870 and 1899, every district in Newfoundland had voted for Local Option with the exception of St. John's East and St. John's West.⁶⁷ This

⁶⁶ Mariana Valverde, *Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), 15.

⁶⁷ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 17 May 1915.

meant that anyone wishing to purchase alcohol had to order it by mail or telegraph and have it delivered to their community from St. John's.

Even though nearly every community had voted for Local Option, merchants in St. John's shipped a great quantity of alcohol to the rest of the Dominion. In 1873, there were 62,000 gallons of beer, 14,000 gallons of wine, and 167,000 gallons of liquor consumed in the Dominion. Unhappy with the amount of alcohol flowing from St. John's, temperance workers set their sights on enacting total prohibition in Newfoundland. In 1888 a bill was submitted in the House of Assembly that would have created a plebiscite for the people to vote on the prohibition issue.⁶⁸ When the bill was put to a vote, many members felt that prohibiting alcohol would infringe on the individual rights of those who drank responsibly. It failed by a large majority. Temperance groups made another attempt to enact prohibition through a Local Option vote in St. John's in 1909. If this vote passed, it would have prevented the sale of alcohol in the last two remaining districts and would have, in essence, been a prohibition of alcohol for the whole Dominion. The vote failed and this was the last serious attempt to pass prohibition before the war.

The activities of temperance reformers prior to the First World War show that there was a significant desire to prohibit the sale, consumption, and manufacturing of alcohol. Despite this, these organizations had great difficulties in prohibiting alcohol because many viewed it as a violation of the freedom of the individual. They were able to pass Local Option legislation in all but two districts, but they could neither garner enough support for a Prohibition bill nor pass Local Option laws in St. John's. This was because those who

⁶⁸ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 17 May 1915.

supported Local Option wanted to eliminate saloons in their communities, while still permitting people to drink in the privacy of their own homes. During the First World War, the temperance movement received a tremendous boost as the language of sacrifice and patriotism that emerged from the war transformed notions of masculinity and what men owed to their families and the state. Ultimately, the rights of community were seen as more important than the rights of the individual.

Liquor and Local Option

The campaign for prohibition began shortly before the First World War, on 3 March 1914, when Prime Minister Morris presented two petitions in the House of Assembly. The first was from 500 residents of St. John's West who were outraged with how easily people could order liquor from St. John's and have it transported into Local Option districts. The second petition, from the WCTU called for the government to pass a bill to take a plebiscite on the prohibition issue:

Your petitioners are of opinion that the time has come when the importation, sale, and manufacture of intoxicants in Newfoundland should be prohibited, and in order that the inhabitants may be afforded an opportunity of directly deciding upon the matter they urgently request that an act be passed during the present session creating the necessary procedure for the taking of a plebiscite at an early date.⁶⁹

On the issue of a total prohibition Morris was skeptical. He told the House of Assembly that the matter of prohibition would take some time and serious consideration before the House could vote on a prohibition bill. He also found the bill to be somewhat extreme because it would prohibit the sale, manufacture and possession of alcohol. As far as he was

⁶⁹ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 3 March 1914.

aware, no country, state, or city had completely prohibited alcohol so that nobody could drink it. Despite his skepticism, Morris acknowledged the good that Local Option had done for Newfoundland.⁷⁰

Unlike Morris, the ardent prohibitionist William Coaker expressed unwavering support for these petitions. He took issue with Morris's suggestion that a complete prohibition of alcohol would be too extreme. Instead, Coaker suggested that he would only support a prohibition bill if it banned the manufacture, sale, and importation of alcohol. By allowing the importation of alcohol for personal use, Coaker argued that it would only prevent the poor people from purchasing alcohol because they would not have enough money to import it for themselves. Attacking the Prime Minister's stance on the importation of alcohol, Coaker compared alcohol to poison. He reminded the Prime Minister that Newfoundland already had passed strict regulations on who could possess poison to protect the people. He swore that alcohol was worse than poison and argued the government should treat it as such.⁷¹

J.M Kent, spoke against the prohibition petitions. He said that the House would be shirking their duty if they put prohibition to a public vote. The people elected the members of the House of Assembly to create laws, and they should be the ones to decide on the prohibition issue. Kent also warned that by prohibiting liquor, the government would force those who wanted to drink to consume things that were far worse for them than regulated alcohol. Instead of coercing citizens into sobriety, Kent advised that the government focus

⁷⁰ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 3 March 1914.

⁷¹ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 3 March 1914.

on “moral suasion” to discourage citizens from drinking to excess. He also suggested that the House forward any further petitions for prohibition to the Colonial Secretary so he could investigate the prohibition issue and revisit it if necessary when the house meets next year.⁷²

Following the speeches of Coaker and Kent, eleven members presented petitions to the House from Burin, Twillingate, Harbour Grace, Burgeo-La Poile, Bonavista, Trinity, Fogo, Placentia-St. Mary’s, and Bay de Verde. The majority of these petitions called for an end to the shipment of alcohol from St. John’s to Local Option districts while some called for outright prohibition. They were all forwarded to the Colonial Secretary for further consideration and discussion in the next meeting of the legislature.⁷³

Pondering Prohibition

When the House of Assembly resumed in 1915, Albert Hickman, a Liberal M.H.A for Bay de Verde, introduced a resolution to prohibit the importation, sale, and manufacture of spirituous liquors and wines. He reminded the House that alcohol had been responsible for a host of problems ranging from increased crime, deteriorating mental health, a lethargic labour force, and poverty. In addition to this, Hickman said that France and Russia had already taken steps to ban alcohol because it damaged their war effort. While Hickman admitted that some would argue the government did not have a mandate to strip away the rights of the individual to drink, he argued that the countless petitions demonstrated that the people demanded that the government put needs of the community before those of the

⁷² *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 3 March 1914.

⁷³ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 3 March 1914.

individual. Walter Jennings, an FPU M.H.A. for Twillingate, agreed with Hickman. He argued that alcohol posed as great a threat to Newfoundland as the German army did. He claimed that in the first six months of the war, Germans killed over 20,000 British soldiers, while in the same period, alcohol killed over 25,000 British civilians.⁷⁴

On the other hand, William Higgins, a People's Party member for St. John's East, explained that while Russia and France had taken steps to ban alcohol in support of the war effort, Britain had not deemed it necessary to strip away the rights of the British people. Higgins indicated that he would vote against these resolutions because he believed that the only way to enforce prohibition was to have the support of the people, and the government could not know the will of the people without a plebiscite. Similarly, the Prime Minister expressed his opposition to enacting prohibition without consulting the people with a plebiscite. He attacked Hickman's notion that the government did not need a mandate from the people to prohibit alcohol. He told the House that the Laurier government in Canada had a national referendum on Prohibition.⁷⁵ Morris explained that prohibition would not succeed without the assurance of public support provided by a plebiscite.

After a lengthy debate on Hickman's resolution, Morris introduced a bill to the House of Assembly that would allow citizens to vote on a ban of the importation, manufacture, and sale of all alcoholic beverages in Newfoundland. After some discussion about the manner of polling, the House of Assembly and Legislative Council passed the bill. The "Act Respecting the Importation, Manufacture, and Sale of Intoxicating Liquors" stated that the people of Newfoundland would be able to vote on the following question:

⁷⁴ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 21 April 1915.

⁷⁵ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 21 April 1915.

“Are you in favour of prohibiting the importation, manufacture and sale of spirits, wine, ale, beer, cider and all other alcoholic liquors for use as beverages?” In order to pass, the bill required a majority of at least forty percent of the registered voters to vote for prohibition.⁷⁶

If this bill passed, it would require the government to introduce legislation that prohibited the manufacture, importation, sale, and possession of all forms of alcoholic beverages over two percent alcohol by volume. The bill made exceptions allowing for the use of alcoholic beverages for religious, medical, and manufacturing purposes. Anyone found to be in violation of the act and illegally imported, manufactured, sold, or possessed alcohol faced a potential fine ranging from a fine of \$50 to \$500 and up to three months in prison.⁷⁷

The Prohibition Campaign

Once the government passed the Prohibition Plebiscite Act, the temperance movement in Newfoundland had a great deal of work ahead of them. While temperance advocates welcomed the chance to vote on the issue, many believed that getting forty percent of registered voters to vote for prohibition was impossible.⁷⁸ John St. John, the editor of the *Mail and Advocate* accused the government of deliberately setting the

⁷⁶ *Acts of the General Assembly of Newfoundland Passed in the Sixth Year of the Reign of His Majesty, King George V.*, (St. John's: J.W. Withers, 1915), 62-64.

⁷⁷ *Acts of the General Assembly of Newfoundland Passed in the Sixth Year of the Reign of His Majesty, King George V.*, (St. John's: J.W. Withers, 1915), 64.

⁷⁸ “Prohibition Killed,” *Mail and Advocate*, 19 May 1915.

percentage so high that the vote would fail.⁷⁹ Similarly, Theobald, a regular columnist for the *Evening Telegram*, believed that prohibitionists would have an uphill battle to achieve the 40% (24,581 votes) needed to pass the bill.⁸⁰

Knowing that they were facing a great challenge, the prohibitionists and temperance workers in Newfoundland began a great campaign to convince Newfoundlanders to vote in favour of prohibition. The prohibitionists' campaign comprised several themes, these included: the impact of alcohol on health; the family; the nation; and the war effort.

Alcohol and Health

One of the primary arguments of the prohibition campaign was that alcohol was poisonous and damaged the health of anyone who consumed it. In a letter to the editor of the *Mail and Advocate* from "Triton," the author expressed concern that alcohol was damaging to the health. Triton argued that alcohol sapped the strength, reduced endurance, and made it harder to deal with the everyday hardships of life. Triton also argued that alcohol reduced the lifespan of drinkers. He suggested that those who abstained from alcohol had, on average, an extra four years of life when compared to those who drank excessively. While Triton admitted that moderate drinkers did not suffer from shorter lives,

⁷⁹ "Prohibition Resolutions," *Mail and Advocate*, 20 May 1915. The *Mail and Advocate* went by several titles over the war including (*Mail and Advocate* and *Evening Advocate*). The *Advocate* was the official newspaper of the Fishermen's Protective Union.

⁸⁰ "Thoughts of Theobald," *Evening Telegram*, 22 May 1915. It is unclear who "Theobald" was. Hereafter he will be referred to only as Theobald.

he said that for many it was impossible to drink with moderation. Given the negative impact on public health, Triton said that the Newfoundland government should prohibit alcohol.⁸¹

Like Triton, the editor of the *Mail and Advocate* also argued that alcohol damaged workplace efficiency. In an article titled “Worth Considering” the editor explained that American railway companies conducted studies on the efficiency of workers. He claimed that their studies proved that employees who abstained from alcohol were far more efficient in their jobs than those who drank. In addition to this, the editor pointed out that many life insurance companies charged higher rates for drinkers because of the impact of alcohol on those who drank.⁸²

To convince Newfoundlanders that alcohol was a significant public health threat, the WCTU hired Dr. Carolyn Geisel of the World Women’s Christian Temperance Union to do a speaking tour across the Dominion with stops across rural Newfoundland.⁸³ Newspapers presented Dr. Geisel as an “Apostle of Health” and highlighted her successful career, which included membership in the Health Committee of the Michigan Federation of Woman’s Clubs; work as the WCTU association superintendent of health and heredity; WCTU national lecturer for medical temperance; and national lecturer for the Anti-Cigarette League.⁸⁴ Dr. Geisel presented a series of lectures on a wide range of topics that touched on individual and community health. Her belief that alcohol was damaging to both

⁸¹ “How Alcohol Effects System, Total Abstinence, Longevity: Even in Small Amounts Alcohol is Injurious – Low Mortality Among Abstainers,” *Mail and Advocate*, 16 April 1915.

⁸² “Worth Considering,” *Mail and Advocate*, 18 August 1915.

⁸³ “Dr. Geisel’s Lectures,” *Evening Telegram*, 5 October 1915.

⁸⁴ “Prohibition,” *Mail and Advocate*, 16 September 1915.

the strength of the individual, the health of society, and that it hindered the war effort, tied all of these lectures together.

The WCTU timed Dr. Geisel's visit to Newfoundland perfectly. One month before the prohibition vote, she travelled across the Dominion, giving lectures about the dangers of alcohol. On 5 October, during a lecture in St. John's titled "A Blot on Your Brain," Dr. Geisel told her audience that alcohol damaged brain cells. She showed statistics that supposedly proved that in Munich, where drinking was commonplace, 72% of babies were born "imperfect."⁸⁵ She compared this to Maine, a dry state, in which 72% of all babies were born "perfect." She explained that alcohol caused a "blot on the brain" which resulted in mental deficiency that parents could pass on to their children. Similarly, in another lecture in St. John's titled "Race Betterment" Dr. Geisel argued that alcohol represented a great risk to the race and resulted in degeneracy, imbecility, and criminality.⁸⁶ While the content of Dr. Geisel's lectures outside St. John's were not recorded, newspaper reports make it clear that Dr. Geisel was successful in convincing people that alcohol was a threat to their health.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ While it is not clear why Dr. Geisel chose Munich as an example of a city brought to degeneracy by alcohol, it is quite possible that she was attempting to draw on popular anti-German sentiment by linking alcohol with Germany.

⁸⁶ "Dr. Geisel's Lectures," *Evening Telegram*, 2 October 1915.

⁸⁷ "Dr. Geisel at Bay Roberts," *Evening Telegram*, 7 October 1915; "Dr. Geisel at Heart's Content," *Evening Telegram*, 10 October 1915; "Dr. Geisel at Catalina," *Evening Telegram*, 15 October 1915; "Dr. Geisel at Keels," *Evening Telegram*, 21 October 1915; "Dr. Geisel at Kings Cove," *Evening Telegram*, 23 October 1915; and "Dr. Geisel at Greenspond," *Evening Telegram*, 25 October 1915.

Alcohol and the Family

In addition to the impact of alcohol on health, many prohibitionists warned of the damage that alcohol could have on families. The importance of family to the prohibition debate became increasingly clear in April of 1915 when the WCTU organized a march that comprised over 2,500 women and children, making it one of the largest marches organized by women in Newfoundland history. This march was a powerful symbol from the women of the WCTU that they believed alcohol posed a grave danger to the family.

Mrs. Howland, a WCTU organizer from Boston, expressed the same sentiment at a temperance meeting at the Total Abstinence Hall in Torbay. In her speech, she explained that women across the world were banding together to protect woman and children, and that it was drunken cruelty towards women and children that caused the WCTU to campaign to rid Newfoundland of alcohol.⁸⁸

The argument that prohibition would benefit families was not limited to the WCTU. Many male prohibitionists argued men could not live up to their full potential as providers and protectors of their families with the constant temptation of alcohol. In an open letter from Andrew Broaders, Vice President of the F.P.U., to William Coaker, Broaders stated his belief that prohibition was the best way for a man to safeguard the future for his children. He argued that a husband and father who spends his money on rum is not only destroying his own health but also inviting sorrow into his home and depriving his children of food and clothing. He told Coaker:

I know of many homes even in outports that have been made desolate through liquor and will never recover from the blow received on account of same. I myself would never have a feeling of security for the future welfare of my children even if I gave

⁸⁸ "W.C.T.U.," *Evening Telegram*, 29 September 1915.

them the best education the world could produce. Human nature is prone to temptation and liquor is the greatest this world has ever seen, for it cuts with a two-edged sword and slays both body and soul together.⁸⁹

Similarly, in a letter to the editor of the *Mail and Advocate*, a supposed Roman Catholic student under the pseudonym “School Boy” said that every man had a duty to leave the world a better place than he found it. This was particularly true for fathers who had to teach their children right from wrong.⁹⁰ He suggested that young men were often lured into a life of alcoholism after only one or two drinks in the local saloon. He said that while young men were drinking their money away, their wives and children were suffering at home:

The time wears on, but oh! What a change has taken place, the babe which a few months ago was so beautiful and was its mother’s pride is now buried in the pauper’s grave, and the wife – what has become of her? She is waiting again to-night a mere skeleton of what she was, waiting for him who is the curse of her life. He comes home and tells her that he is discharged but through no fault of his, then he curses and raves and wonders where he will get money now. At last he commits some crime or something and is imprisoned for life, thus ending a promising career.⁹¹

School Boy finished his letter by imploring every self-respecting father to vote for prohibition, not only for the good of his own family but for the good of his neighbour’s family.

⁸⁹ “Vice President Broaders (F.P.U.) Endorses Mr. Coaker on Prohibition,” *Mail and Advocate*, 6 October 1915.

⁹⁰ “Composition on Prohibition by a Pupil of a R.C. School in Hr. Main District,” *Mail and Advocate*, 12 October 1915.

⁹¹ “Composition on Prohibition by a Pupil of a R.C. School in Hr. Main District,” *Mail and Advocate*, 12 October 1915.

Prohibition, Patriotism, and Sacrifice

Arguments about the impact of alcohol on health and family were part of the Temperance movement from the very beginning. Prohibitionists always portrayed alcohol as the antithesis of family as it destroyed men both mentally and physically while drawing them away from their families and into the saloon.⁹² The difference with the prohibition campaign during the First World War was the infusion of the language of patriotism and sacrifice, which prioritized the needs of the community over the freedom of the individual, into the discussion of prohibition. During the war, advocates often described prohibition as a patriotic movement and insisted that anyone who loved their country would support it. Given the wartime importance placed on patriotism and sacrifice, this shift in language was very beneficial for the prohibition campaign.

The importance of sacrifice to the prohibition campaign can be seen in an editorial in the *Daily News*, published on 17 August 1915. In this piece, the editor told his readers that the prohibition plebiscite would allow Newfoundlanders to decide if “Newfoundland will be better without [alcohol]; whether her people will be happier if it is abolished; whether the social and economic gain will not far out-balance the loss, whether it will not pay to remove what to thousands is a relentless enemy and a snare they cannot escape.”⁹³ He further explained that citizens would have happier, more prosperous lives if they would be manly enough to give up alcohol. He called upon every male citizen to “show his

⁹² Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, “‘John Barleycorn Must Die’: An Introduction to The Social History of Alcohol,” in *Drink in Canada: Historical Essays*, ed. Cheryl Krasnick Warsh (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1993), 6-14.

⁹³ “Prohibition Campaign,” *Daily News*, 17 August 1915.

manhood, his sense of responsibility, and his spirit of self-sacrifice,” and join the movement to end the liquor traffic.⁹⁴

Sir Joseph Outerbridge, a St. John’s businessman, philanthropist, and Vice President of the Newfoundland Patriotic Association expressed a similar sentiment at a large Prohibition Committee meeting at the Board of Trade Rooms in St. John’s. During this meeting, Outerbridge told the other members that he was a moderate drinker. Despite this, as a patriotic citizen, he was willing to give up any enjoyment or gratification he received from drinking so that the greater community could benefit from prohibition. Similarly, when the president of the Prohibition Committee spoke at this meeting, he admitted that he too enjoyed an occasional drink. He said that those who already abstained from alcohol were not sacrificing anything by voting for prohibition. For those like him, who drank moderately, voting for prohibition would be a serious act of self-denial.⁹⁵

Reverend Edgar Jones, in a sermon to St. Thomas Anglican Church, addressed the issue of individual rights and liberty that prohibition would impact. He told his parishioners that a fundamental part of living in a community was voluntarily sacrificing individual rights for the sake of the community. He said that while citizens may have great liberty to do as they please in their home, any activity that impacts life outside their home must not be harmful or detrimental to the interests of the greater community. Jones also told his audience that legislation had been passed to close unsanitary markets, move malodorous factories away from the city, and require milk to meet purity regulations. He reminded the churchgoers that society had increasingly demanded that the rights of the community take

⁹⁴ “Prohibition Campaign,” *Daily News*, 17 August 1915.

⁹⁵ “Prohibition Campaign: Big Meeting Last Night,” *Daily News*, 11 September 1915.

priority over the rights of the individual, and that all citizens must be willing to sacrifice their right to consume alcohol for the greater good of the community.⁹⁶

Perhaps the most compelling example of the importance of the language of sacrifice to the prohibition campaign came from the editor of the *Daily News*, John Robinson. In an editorial published on 14 September 1915, Robinson argued that during the war, sacrifice for the greater good was paramount, and prohibition was a small sacrifice to rid Newfoundland of the very serious threat of liquor. Drawing on wartime conceptions of sacrifice and masculinity he wrote:

These are the days of self-sacrifice. All that is manliest in the nation is surrendering comfort and safety, imperilling, and in many instances, losing life or limb. And why? In order that others may be protected; that tyranny may be overthrown; that women may be protected from outrage and children from brutality. And surely the overthrow of the traffic in intoxicants has a similar object in view. Is there a harsher tyrant than rum?... The infamies of zeppelins dropping bombs that bring death to women and children; the awful butchery of the babies of the *Lusitania*; the outrages committed upon defenceless womanhood and childhood in Belgium and elsewhere, stir to white hot indignation the soul of every decent man. Is there one who can honestly deny that equal horrors daily result from the drinking customs of the age?⁹⁷

Another powerful tool for the prohibition campaign was the tremendous importance placed on patriotism during the war. The temperance movement used Newfoundland's wartime patriotic craze to advance the prohibition campaign as they argued that voting for prohibition was the most patriotic thing that a citizen could do as it would have profound benefits for the nation.

In 1915, temperance advocates began portraying prohibition as a revitalizing force for the Dominion. They argued that people were spending over \$1,000,000 on alcohol each

⁹⁶ "An Appeal for Prohibition," *Mail and Advocate*, 5 October 1915.

⁹⁷ "The Prohibition Issue," *Daily News*, 14 September 1915.

year. Temperance workers said that once drinkers could no longer spend money on alcohol, they would either put that money into savings, reducing poverty, or spend more money on food and clothing, resulting in a healthier population and more money in taxes for the government.⁹⁸ Given the supposed benefits of prohibition for the nation, temperance workers argued that voting for prohibition was a supremely patriotic act. In a column in the *Mail and Advocate*, the editor extolled the patriotism, principle, and masculinity of prohibitionists:

The man in the Assembly who votes for Prohibition will be forever enrolled amongst our greatest men. For only strong men possessing a confidence grounded upon principles that will always defend right against wrong and place country first, and always be found ready to strangle an evil, that requires no arguments to convince the most stupid that it is the one stupendous curse of Christian civilization, responsible for more crime, misery, and destruction of life than all other agencies of evil that exist.⁹⁹

In the *Mail and Advocate*, William Coaker warned that people in the outports were suffering because of the sale of liquor in St. John's. He said that workers drinking liquor in town were reducing their workplace efficiency, increasing the cost to transport fish out of St. John's. Coaker argued that prohibiting the liquor traffic in St. John's would cause a rise in the price of fish by 20¢ per quintal. Given his belief that prohibition would increase prosperity for everyone, Coaker said that any man who loved his country would be ready to vote for prohibition and "make such sacrifices gladly and willingly to advance the public welfare and make their native land prosperous and happy."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ "Prohibition Resolutions," *Mail and Advocate*, 17 April 1915.

⁹⁹ "The Question of Prohibition," *Mail and Advocate*, 20 April 1915.

¹⁰⁰ "Mr. Coaker's Appeal," *Mail and Advocate*, 25 September 1915.

By describing prohibition as an example of patriotic self-sacrifice, temperance advocates were tapping into a powerful wartime idea that the basic responsibility of all citizens was to make personal sacrifices for the good of the nation. This provided a tremendous boost for the temperance movement. While soldiers were sacrificing their lives for the greater good, temperance campaigners argued that civilians could also make sacrifices by ridding the Dominion of alcohol.¹⁰¹

Prohibition and the War

During the war, citizens and governments around the world began to worry that alcohol was damaging the war effort. In an in-depth examination of the history of alcohol, Rod Phillips concludes that the pressure of the First World War caused concerns about the health effect of alcohol to increase and citizens to put demands on their governments to pass regulations that they would have never passed in peace time.¹⁰² Phillips argues that alcohol consumption was not compatible with wartime ideas of masculine military service:

If alcohol had a negative effect on health, then it had the potential to be particularly serious on the case of soldiers. They were expected to be fit and robust models of manhood, rather than weak, hollow-chested, and mentally deficient specimens that temperance literature general portrayed drinkers as being. If alcohol undermined moral order and the stability of civilian society— which became crucially important as the “home front” during the war— it threatened havoc and defeat in military society, where men had to be in peak physical and emotional form, unquestioningly patriotic, and ready to obey orders, no matter what the consequences.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ “Mr. Hickman’s Resolutions,” *Daily News*, 16 April 1915.

¹⁰² Rod Phillips, *Alcohol: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 240.

¹⁰³ Phillips, *Alcohol: A History*, 240.

While Phillips's work does not examine prohibition in Newfoundland, these debates that were occurring in Britain, Canada, France, Russia, and other nations, were developing in similar ways in the Dominion of Newfoundland.

As a result of the concerns over wartime consumption of alcohol, Temperance workers utilized the wartime language of sacrifice and service to describe the prohibition campaign. To harness the powerful language of war, prohibitionists described the campaign to ban alcohol as a national struggle and as important to the future of Newfoundland as was defeating Germany. They portrayed the prohibition campaign as a battle of good versus evil, sobriety versus drunkenness.

A prominent example of the use of the language of war to describe prohibition came from Britain. In March of 1915, David Lloyd George, the British Minister of Munitions, told the Shipbuilding Employers Federation "we are fighting Germany, Austria, and drink, and as far as I can see the greatest of these three deadly foes is drink."¹⁰⁴ Lloyd George's quote appeared in Newfoundland newspapers and public speeches, resonating among local people. Those who repeated this quote sought to convince Newfoundlanders that alcohol was as dangerous to the Dominion as the German Army.

Methodist Reverend N.M. Guy expressed this sentiment at a Temperance Rally at the Methodist College Hall in St. John's. He told his audience that alcohol was destroying the masculinity of Newfoundland and the whole of the British Empire. Guy explained that alcohol damaged men's ability to live up to their traditional roles as providers for their families and protectors of the nation. He explained that alcohol hindered the efficiency of

¹⁰⁴ "Prohibition," *Mail and Advocate*, 21 August 1915.

men whether they were soldiers, fishermen, or loggers, saying that “the liquor traffic destroyed the homes and made wrecks of the cradles of those who should be perpetuate the country.” Guy argued that alcohol was a far greater risk to Newfoundland than the war. He said: “many mothers in this Island to-day would rather see their sons face the German bayonets than the open saloon doors which constantly tempt them to destruction.”¹⁰⁵

Reverend W.H. Thomas also portrayed alcohol as a grave threat to Newfoundland. In a sermon at the Congregational Church in St. John’s, Thomas told his parishioners that the enemies outside of Newfoundland (Germany and Austria) were much less dangerous than the threat of liquor that resided in each and every household:

Prussian militarism is bad, but British alcoholism is worse. The cruelest German or Turk can but temporarily outrage the bodies and slay the lives of his victims. He cannot deprive them of their manhood and womanhood nor cut them off from everlasting bliss. But alcohol murders the God-like in man and the angelic in woman, dooming them to eternal destruction.¹⁰⁶

Thomas implored people to support prohibition because he believed that it was far worse for young men to die from drinking than it was for them to die in the trenches.

Theobald, also believed that the campaign for prohibition was as vital for the future of Newfoundland as the war was. He said that force was necessary for both causes; the war used “physical force” while prohibition used the “force of the law” to accomplish its goals. He said that if Newfoundland was justified in using force to stop Germany, then they were justified in using force to stop the drink traffic. In both cases, Theobald argued that moral suasion was not enough and force was necessary. He explained that the war was being

¹⁰⁵ “Temperance Rally at College Hall,” *Evening Telegram*, 20 April 1915.

¹⁰⁶ “Prohibition: Powerful Address Delivered by Rev. W.H. Thomas at Congregational Church,” *Mail and Advocate*, 3 May 1915.

fought so that “freedom may be born in the world, and a lasting peace may come,” while prohibition was “cleaning out an evil of the physical appetite in order that good may come to us and to future generations.” Given the incredible similarities, Theobald argued that it would be hypocritical for anyone who supports the war to oppose prohibition.¹⁰⁷

Comparing the work of the prohibitionists to the work of soldiers, the editor of the *Evening Telegram* argued both soldiers and prohibitionists were doing their patriotic duty. He praised soldiers serving in the Dardanelles and the North Sea who were patriotically fighting the enemies of the British Empire. He also praised temperance workers: “at home the friends of these [soldiers] are also engaged in patriotic service in endeavouring to cleanse the Ancient Colony of the cursed drink.” By maintaining that the prohibition campaign was a battle of good against evil, prohibitionists tapped into the powerful language of war that pervaded public discourse during the war years. In using the language of war, prohibitionists augmented their traditional arguments for prohibition by suggesting that the war against alcohol was every bit as important as the war against Germany.

One final argument made for prohibition was practical in nature. Shortly after the war had begun, many people had begun to suggest that Newfoundland needed to ban alcohol to support the war effort. The driving force behind this argument was the claim that Russia had banned the manufacture and sale of vodka and France had prohibited the sale of absinth.¹⁰⁸ Those making this argument claimed that both France and Russia had put restrictions on alcohol because of the detrimental impact it had on the economy and the demoralizing effect on soldiers. Journalists, politicians, and temperance workers began to

¹⁰⁷ “The Thoughts of Theobald,” *Evening Telegram*, 23 October 1915.

¹⁰⁸ “War and Temperance,” *Mail and Advocate*, 26 October 1914.

cite examples of wartime restrictions on alcohol from France, Russia, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Austria, Italy, Britain, and Canada.¹⁰⁹ This argument was so powerful that upon hearing that France and Russia had restricted alcohol, the Twillingate division of the Sons of Temperance forwarded a petition to the government demanding that Newfoundland prohibit alcohol for the duration of the war.¹¹⁰

Others argued that alcohol was a waste of resources that were desperately needed for the war effort. In a letter to the editor of the *Daily News*, a writer under the pseudonym “Citizen” said that alcohol was an unnecessary drain on a household’s resources that would worsen the standard of living for women and children. Given the increased cost of living, “Citizen” said that the government and the people had to do everything they could to save money. They advised that preventing men from wasting their money on alcohol was a good start.¹¹¹ Similarly, in the *Evening Telegram*, Theobald pointed to Russia as a shining example of how prohibition could improve the economic standing of a country. He told his readers that following the prohibition of alcohol, the Russian government saw an increase of tax revenue and an increase of money in citizens’ savings accounts. Through prohibition, Theobald maintained Newfoundland would see an increase in the standard of living, a decrease in crime and poverty, and a general increase in health.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ For more examples see: “Sobriety Grows,” *Mail and Advocate*, 8 August 1914; “Are Temperance Lecturers Fanatics and Cranks?” *Daily News*, 10 December 1914; “The Observer: Prohibition,” *Twillingate Sun*, 3 April 1915; “The World Against Alcohol,” *Daily News*, 2 November 1915; “Drunkenness Has Decreased,” *Evening Telegram*, 2 November 1915; *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 7 April 1915; *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 21 April 1915, pg. 8.

¹¹⁰ “North Star Division, No. 15, Sons of Temperance,” *Twillingate Sun*, 17 April 1915.

¹¹¹ “Closing the Saloons: Urged by Citizen,” *Daily News*, 22 September 1915.

¹¹² “Thoughts of Theobald,” *Evening Telegram*, 24 July 1915.

The editor of the *Mail and Advocate* also called on citizens to support the war effort by conserving and economizing. He advocated for societal thrift, because he believed the war would end either with a decisive victory or with the complete exhaustion of resources of Britain or Germany. The editor argued that Germany had already eliminated waste and was therefore in a better position to sustain a long-term war effort because they had eliminated alcohol:

The sheer waste of money in Newfoundland in the purchase and consumption of liquor to say nothing of its other undeniable effects at a time when every good citizen should be straining every nerve to conserve the resources of the country is lamentable. Do we like our beverages better than our country? Do we care less for Newfoundland than the average German cares for the fatherland? ¹¹³

In calling on Newfoundlanders to eliminate wasteful spending on alcohol, the editor told people that consuming alcohol reduced the likelihood of a British victory and he challenged the patriotism of citizens who drank.

In addition to economic reasons for prohibiting alcohol, prohibitionists argued that alcohol was detrimental to the health of men and particularly to the ability of soldiers to fight. This theme was clear in the lectures of Dr. Geisel on her speaking tour of Newfoundland. At a lecture in Grenfell Hall, in St. John's, Dr. Geisel told the audience that because of the war each and every Britisher owed a duty to God and King to be the very best that they could be. Men, in particular, had a duty to prepare themselves both physically and mentally for the rigors of war. She preached that only abstinence from alcoholic beverages could ensure that men had the strength to win the war and "rebuild the race"

¹¹³ "Eliminating Waste," *Mail and Advocate*, 16 August 1915.

after the war was over.¹¹⁴ She warned her audience that liquor could be the downfall of their society, arguing that Rome was a strong society until Romans began drinking wine, which resulted in the decline of Roman manhood and eventually the fall of Rome.¹¹⁵ During her time in Newfoundland, Dr. Geisel focused her speeches on what she claimed was the debilitating impact of alcohol on soldiers including: a loss of strength, the deterioration of muscles, reduction in cognitive ability, and a decrease in accuracy when firing a rifle.¹¹⁶

The relationship between sobriety and combat effectiveness was clear in the minds of those who advocated for prohibition. In a letter to the editor of the *Daily News*, Reverend Daniel O’Callaghan of St. Bride’s extolled the importance of temperance on a soldier’s ability to fight:

But in these days when our Empire is fighting for its very life, when all that are best and pluckiest and hardiest amongst us are appealed to by King and Country to go forth and fight a grim and dogged fight that will test the mettle of the best – what do we find? We find that the greatest organiser and soldier, upon whom and in whom every heart of every child of Empire has pinned its absolute trust, Kitchener of Khartoum strongly advocating his great army to entirely refrain from intoxicants of any sort.¹¹⁷

O’Callaghan continued to say that it was far more than a coincidence that the German army, who supplied their soldiers with liquor, were suffering appalling losses. At the same time,

¹¹⁴ “Last Night’s Lecture: A Magnetic Address to a Sympathetic Audience,” *Daily News*, 1 October 1915.

¹¹⁵ “Lecture on Health by Dr. Carolyn Geisel,” *Mail and Advocate*, 8 October 1915

¹¹⁶ “Dr. Geisel’s Lectures,” *Evening Telegram*, 10 October 1915; “Dr. Geisel at Trinity,” *Mail and Advocate*, 14 October 1915.

¹¹⁷ “Are Temperance Lecturers Fanatics and Cranks?” *Daily News*, 10 Dec 1914.

the armies of France and Russia, who did not receive alcohol, were winning battle after battle.¹¹⁸

Some supporters of prohibition felt so strongly that alcohol was a threat to the British war effort that they attacked anyone who sold liquor. In a letter to the editor of the *Evening Telegram*, an author writing under the pseudonym “Reason” argued that 50% of all rejected volunteers showed evidence that drinking had caused their health to deteriorate. To make matters worse, Reason claimed that a significant number of men were discharged for drunkenness after they had passed medical screening.¹¹⁹ The belief that alcohol was hindering Newfoundlanders’ ability to fight the war was so strong that the editor of the *Daily News* declared that anyone who sold alcohol to soldiers was committing treason by weakening British soldiers and aiding the German war effort.

The importance of the Great War on the prohibition debate in Newfoundland cannot be understated. The discourse of patriotism, sacrifice, and the practical implications of prohibition during the war impacted the temperance movement. This is clear from a modern perspective, but the contemporary temperance worker also saw the impact that the war was having on public support for prohibition. Some claimed that the horrors of war were causing the public to see the terrible effects that liquor had on society.¹²⁰ Others argued that the war increased support for prohibition because of need of sober soldiers.¹²¹ What is

¹¹⁸ “Are Temperance Lecturers Fanatics and Cranks?” *Daily News*, 10 Dec 1914. O’Callaghan’s claim that France and Russia were winning “battle after battle” while Germany was suffering appalling losses was not based in reality. By December 1914, both sides were firmly entrenched, and there was very little territorial gain for either side.

¹¹⁹ “Reply to Newfoundlander,” *Evening Telegram*, 19 October 1915.

¹²⁰ “A Triumph for Temperance,” *Mail and Advocate*, 1 April 1915; and “Lesson of the War,” *Daily News*, 16 October 1915.

¹²¹ “Present War Boosts Cause of Temperance,” *Mail and Advocate*, 17 November 1914.

clear, is that all temperance workers acknowledged that across the world, the war had advanced the cause of prohibition.¹²²

On 4 November 1915, citizens across the Dominion went to the polls to vote either for or against prohibition. In order for prohibition to pass, 40% of registered voters were required to vote for prohibition, which meant 24,581 votes. On 26 November 1915, after the polls closed and the votes were counted, the government announced that prohibition had been successful.¹²³ The plebiscite passed by the slimmest of margins, receiving just 381 votes over what was required. While the plebiscite barely passed the threshold of 40% of registered voters, a vast majority of those who showed up at polls voted for prohibition. 24,956 people voted for and 5,348 voted against. Port de Grave, Carbonear, Harbour Main, Harbour Grace, Bay de Verde, St. John's West, St. John's East, Trinity, Bonavista, St. George's, Burgeo, Fogo, Burin, Fortune, Twillingate, and St. Barbe districts all overwhelmingly voted for prohibition. The only districts that voted against prohibition were Ferryland and Placentia.¹²⁴

Conclusion

The First World War changed the prohibition debate in Newfoundland. Prior to the war, arguments for prohibition focused on the impact of alcohol on health and family. After the war began, temperance workers used the powerful language of sacrifice and patriotism to convince people that the government should prohibit alcohol. They argued that alcohol

¹²² "Temperance Now a World Issue," *Mail and Advocate*, 17 August 1915; and "The World Against Alcohol," *Evening Telegram*, 2 November 1915.

¹²³ "Prohibition Carried," *Evening Telegram*, 26 November 1916.

¹²⁴ "Prohibition Carried," *Evening Telegram*, 26 November 1916.

was hurting Newfoundland and the war effort. Temperance advocates lectured that banning alcohol would help Newfoundland contribute to the war by preventing the waste of resources, improving men's health and increasing combat effectiveness. They persuaded people that prohibition was in the best interest of the nation and that every citizen had a duty to make personal sacrifices for such a benefit and to help the British Empire win the war.

The wartime temperance movement in Newfoundland developed in many similar ways to other wartime campaigns for prohibition around the world. Britain, France, Russia, and other countries worried about the impact that alcohol was having on the home front and on soldiers who were fighting in the trenches. What separated Newfoundland from other countries was how far the Dominion government was willing to go to eliminate the consumption of alcohol. In Russia, the government prohibited vodka shops from operating for the duration of the war and banned soldiers on active duty from consuming alcohol but continued to allow civilians to consume beer and wine. France banned the production and sale of Absinth in 1914 and attempted to discourage their soldiers from drinking strong liquor by providing them with wine. Britain had comparatively fewer restrictions on alcohol, only limiting the hours that bars and restaurants could sell alcohol.¹²⁵

Throughout the war, the majority of Canadian provinces voted themselves dry. In 1918, the Canadian government passed an order-in-council banning the manufacture and transport of alcohol across the country. This order only targeted public drinking. The consumption of alcohol was still permitted in private residences.¹²⁶ Comparatively,

¹²⁵ Phillips, *Alcohol: A History*, 243-247.

¹²⁶ Craig Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003), 180-181.

Newfoundland's prohibition of alcohol was drastically different from that of Britain, France, Russia, and Canada. By criminalizing the sale, consumption, manufacture, and possession of recreational alcohol, the Newfoundland government took drastically greater steps to prohibit the consumption of alcohol than any other state involved in the war. In many ways, Newfoundland's prohibition of alcohol closely resembled prohibition in the United States that followed the Volstead Act in 1919.

The prohibition debate highlights the wartime changes in the liberal order. Prior to the war, local option prohibited the sale of alcohol in specific districts but did not prevent individuals from ordering liquor from St. John's. Those who believed that the government had no business telling individuals that they could not consume alcohol hindered prewar attempts to prohibit alcohol. During the war, very few people argued that the rights of the individual to drink, outweighed the rights of the community. In essence, the rights of the individual took precedence over the benefits of the community.

During the war, the language of sacrifice altered discussions on prohibition. The societal focus on the good of the community was so powerful, that very few people dared to speak out against prohibition or the right of the individual to choose to drink. Those who argued that the rights of the community to safety, healthy families, to be protected from alcohol, and to have soldiers who were physically fit to fight the war dominated the wartime temperance conversation. This time around, the rights of the community outweighed the rights of those who wanted to drink.

Chapter 2: Food Rationing and Price Control

Introduction

A major aspect of a total war is the control of economies and markets to ensure that citizens have enough food and other necessities to last through the war. This is particularly true when conditions of the war result in shortages of the necessities of life. During the First World War, international demand for food and coal caused the cost of living in Newfoundland to skyrocket. While the rest of the British Empire faced increases in the cost of living, Newfoundland was in a uniquely difficult situation because of its reliance on food imports. Without the ability to significantly increase domestic production of food, the government struggled to respond to increasing prices and the plummeting availability of the necessities of life. As a result, there was a great public debate over what the government should do about the rising cost of living. On one side of this debate were supporters of liberal state policies, who aligned themselves with Prime Minister Edward Morris. This group believed in free markets and felt that social problems were the responsibility of the individual to solve. On the other side were the Progressives, who aligned themselves with William Coaker. They advocated for state regulation of the economy and believed that society had collective responsibility for social problems.

The Coal Crisis

Shortly after the outbreak of the war, Newfoundland faced great difficulties in securing enough coal for its industrial and residential needs. The cause of the shortage of

coal was twofold: the British war effort required massive amounts of coal, which increased prices and created shortages; and a lack of tonnage in Newfoundland, which left merchants unable to import sufficient quantities of coal. While the war's impact on the price of coal was outside the government's control, the decisions of several businesses in Newfoundland to sell their vessels to the Russian government caused the tonnage crisis.

In 1914, the Russian government was critically short of steel hulled steamships suitable for use as icebreakers in the White Sea. In search of vessels for this task, the Russian government approached Newfoundland shipowners and offered them exceptionally high prices, often double the original price of the vessels.¹²⁷ The government in Newfoundland quickly approved the sale of these ships. The first ships to be sold were the Reid Company's *Lintrose* and *Bruce*, which had been used to ferry freight and passengers between North Sydney and Port Aux Basques. By 1916, five more ships had been sold, including A.J. Harvey's *Bellaventure*, *Bonaventure*, and *Adventure*; Job Brother's *Beothic*; and Baine Johnson's *Iceland*.¹²⁸

While the sale of these steamers was incredibly profitable for the vessel's owners, it was disastrous for the people of Newfoundland. After the sale of these ships, the Dominion faced a serious shortage of tonnage that merchants could use to carry imported goods. Many of the owners attempted to replace the vessels they had sold, but their new ships were often much too small to replace the vessels sold to the Russians.¹²⁹ By 1915,

¹²⁷ W.E. Davidson to Arthur Bonar Law, 11 January 1916, Colonial Office Files 194/261.

¹²⁸ O'Brien, "Producers versus Profiteers: The Politics of Class in Newfoundland During the First World War," 51-52.

¹²⁹ O'Brien, "Producers versus Profiteers: The Politics of Class in Newfoundland During the First World War," 52.

freight was building up in Sydney as companies had great difficulty securing tonnage to get their goods to Newfoundland. In addition, coal importers could not secure enough coal to satisfy the requirements of the Dominion's industrial and residential demands. This coal shortage became serious by the winter of 1915, when many began to worry that the Dominion would not have enough coal to last the winter.

Given the limited stocks of coal held in Newfoundland, prices began to rise dramatically. As a result of the rising prices, some people demanded coal dealers limit their profits, thereby lowering the price of coal for everyone. In a letter to the *Daily News*, Reverend Canon Noel informed the coal dealers that their counterparts in England had agreed to limit their profits on the sale of coal for residential use. Reverend Noel suggested that the actions of these coal dealers were the pinnacle of patriotism: "Here is a splendid example of patriotism. Merchants who cannot leave the country and shoulder a rifle, can 'do their bit' to keep up their end of the plank and help others to do the same. Are there not some in this country who can emulate them?"¹³⁰ Noel's letter was an attempt to regulate coal prices not through government intervention but through appeals for voluntarism that would meet wartime conceptions of patriotism and sacrifice.

In June of 1915, the *Evening Telegram* published a letter to the editor, by an author under the pseudonym "Importer," that argued supply and demand was the only thing that could regulate coal prices, not the coal merchants themselves. Theobald responded to this letter. He asked "Importer" if he could square his faith in supply and demand with Christian ethics. He then quoted Proverbs 22:16, implying that those who make their wealth by

¹³⁰ "Coal Prices," *Daily News*, 19 June 1915.

oppressing the poor would surely end in poverty. Theobald implored the coal dealers to regulate prices themselves, telling them that using the excuse of supply and demand was disgraceful to the human intellect.¹³¹

While writers for the *Daily News* and *Evening Telegram* tried to convince coal dealers to lower their coal prices, the government was far more concerned with ensuring that the Dominion had adequate stocks of coal. On 4 December, Prime Minister Morris sent a telegraph to seven coal dealers in Newfoundland asking if there was any truth to the rumours of coal shortages. Morris demanded to know if there was any risk of a coal famine over the winter and spring, and if there was, what each of the coal dealers were doing to rectify the situation. He also cautioned them that if the rumours he heard were true, if coal dealers were doing nothing to prevent coal shortages, then the government would have no other choice but to take drastic measures to prevent a scarcity of coal and prevent increases in price.¹³²

In response to Morris's inquiries, J.J. Mullaly of J.J. Mullaly and Co. told him that the stocks of coal in the Dominion were unusually low due to the lack of tonnage available. He warned Morris that he was not aware of any concerted efforts on behalf of the coal dealers to bring in more coal, and he did not think there was much they could do unless dealers could secure additional tonnage.¹³³

A.J. Harvey, owner of a large import and export operation, also wrote the Prime Minister, informing him that Newfoundland was approximately 22,000 tonnes short of

¹³¹ "Thoughts of Theobald," *Evening Telegram*, 19 June 1915.

¹³² E.P. Morris to A.J. Harvey et al., 4 December 1915, PANL, GN 8.67.

¹³³ J.J. Mullaly to E.P. Morris, 6 December 1915, PANL, GN 8.67.

what they needed for the winter. Harvey informed Morris that his company was bringing in as much coal as possible, but they had not been able to fill their stores due to the lack of tonnage. On a positive note, Harvey told Morris that he had sent out many telegraphs and letters trying to obtain another steamer of approximately 5,000 tonnes to bring coal to the island.¹³⁴

A.H. Murray, another coal dealer, also agreed the lack of tonnage resulted in the depletion of coal stocks and warned that a famine was likely. Murray informed the Prime Minister that coal prices would rise if merchants had to purchase new ships in order to import coal. Instead, Murray recommended the government hire a 2,000 tonne steamer to get coal from Sydney and distribute it to the various coal dealers who would sell it to consumers. He admitted that this would cost the government some money, but he told Morris that it was the only way to prevent merchants from passing the cost of new ships on to the consumer.¹³⁵

While Morris was weighing his options, Progressives in Newfoundland were attacking the Prime Minister for his failure to take decisive action to prevent either a coal famine or a surge in prices. On 7 December, after receiving word that Morris had telegraphed all coal dealers in St. John's to determine if there truly was a coal shortage, the *Mail and Advocate* demanded to know why Morris had waited until December to determine if the Dominion had enough coal to get through the winter. John St. John argued that if Morris had been proactive in looking out for the needs of the people, he could have induced

¹³⁴ A.J. Harvey to E.P. Morris, 6 December 1915, PANL, GN 8.67.

¹³⁵ A.H. Murray to E.P. Morris, 6 December 1915, PANL, GN 8.67.

the owners of the several sealing vessels, in October, to sail back and forth from Sydney with loads of coal.¹³⁶

On 10 December, the *Mail and Advocate* again attacked Morris for failing to ensure that there would be enough coal to last the winter. St. John, argued the Prime Minister had a duty to ensure that merchants had adequate stocks of the necessities of life. The *Advocate* further criticized Morris for trusting the merchants and the capitalist free market to provide the people of Newfoundland with enough coal to sustain them through the winter.¹³⁷ Instead, the newspaper advocated that Morris interfere with the free market by coercing the owners of sealing vessels to travel to Sydney for coal, even though there was more profitable uses for their ships.

Unlike the *Mail and Advocate*, the *Evening Telegram* did not blame the coal shortage on Morris's inaction. Instead, Theobald said the real reason for the rise in prices was the lack of tonnage. He pointed out that once businesses sold their large steamers to the Russian government, the only ships available to bring coal to Newfoundland were much smaller sealing vessels. In order to make their small loads profitable enough to justify the journey to Sydney, they charged a freight rate of \$4.00 a tonne, whereas the previous vessels charged \$1.80. For this reason, he concluded the coal dealers could not be blamed for the high price of coal. In the eyes of Theobald, the only way to reduce the price of coal in the Dominion was for Morris to place a limit on freight rates, thereby bringing down the price of coal.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ "Another Codd," *Mail and Advocate*, 7 December 1915.

¹³⁷ "Coal Shortage," *Mail and Advocate*, 10 December 1915.

¹³⁸ "The Thoughts of Theobald," *Evening Telegram*, 11 December 1915.

Despite the criticism Morris received in the news, once he determined a coal shortage existed, he set to work to ensure the Dominion would have enough coal to last the winter and spring. In order to secure more vessels, Morris telegraphed several ship owners to request they bring back partial loads of coal for coal merchants while their sealing vessels were in Sydney to pick up coal for the seal fishery.¹³⁹ Robert Job, owner of Job Brothers & Co., replied to Morris and said that he could send the *Neptune* to Sydney. The vessel could not carry much coal outside the needs of the company, and to turn a profit the freight rates on that coal would be exceptionally high.¹⁴⁰

Morris understood that without adequate tonnage merchants would neither be able to get sufficient stocks of coal nor sell that coal for a price that most citizens could afford. He wrote to D.H. MacDougall, manager of the Dominion Coal Company in Sydney, to request assistance in securing stocks of coal. MacDougall told Morris that he would do everything in his power to ensure that Newfoundland had enough coal, but Morris would have to supply the ships to bring the coal to St. John's.¹⁴¹

In an attempt to secure more tonnage for the Dominion, Morris wrote to Governor Davidson. He confessed to Davidson that the Dominion was facing a very serious coal shortage and there would likely be a famine in February if he did not obtain an additional 20,000 tonnes of coal. He told Davidson that Morey & Co. had recently sold the *Beatrice*, which they normally used to import coal, to the Imperial government. Morris requested that the governor contact Arthur Long, Secretary of State for the Colonies and request that

¹³⁹ E.P. Morris to Job Brothers & co., 11 December 1915, PANL, GN 8.67.

¹⁴⁰ Robert Job to E.P. Morris, 13 December 1915, PANL, GN 8.67.

¹⁴¹ E.P. Morris to W.E. Davidson, 14 December 1915, PANL, GN 8.67.

the Admiralty loan the Newfoundland government the *Beatrice*, or another vessel, to bring coal to the Dominion.¹⁴² After some negotiations, Davidson was eventually able to secure a vessel, the *Alconda*, from the Admiralty. It was not available to leave London until the 12th of January and would not arrive in Newfoundland until the 12th of February.¹⁴³

While waiting for coal to arrive on the *Alconda*, the people of Newfoundland had two main concerns. First, they were worried that there would not be enough coal to last until the *Alconda* arrived and second that the price of the *Alconda's* coal would be prohibitively high and fishermen would not be able to afford it. The *Evening Telegram* showed that prior to the war, soft coal cost around \$8.00 a tonne. By 1915, that price had soared as high as \$10.80. Given the circumstances of the war, the *Evening Telegram* attacked the government for failing to control prices and recommended they immediately cancel all duties on coal. Furthermore, *the Telegram* suggested that the government, under the *War Measures Act*, seize all stocks of coal from dealers in the Dominion and sell it directly to the people.¹⁴⁴ Their recommendation was a drastic abandonment of the liberal principle of free markets, but the newspaper believed it was justified given the conditions created by the war.

Unlike the *Evening Telegram*, the *Daily News* did not blame the government for the price of coal. On 4 January, the newly appointed editor of the *Daily News*, John Currie (a People's Party M.H.A for Burin, and brother-in-law of the founder of the *Daily News*,

¹⁴² E.P. Morris to W.E. Davidson, 14 December 1915, PANL, GN 8.67. As the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Long was responsible for all of Newfoundland's external affairs. All communication to Long had to go through the governor.

¹⁴³ E.P. Morris to D.H. MacDougall, 15 January 1916, PANL, GN 8.67; and "The Coal Situation," *Evening Telegram*, 12 February 1916.

¹⁴⁴ "Soft Coal \$10.80 a Ton," *Evening Telegram*, 3 January 1916.

John Robinson) reported that high coal prices were unavoidable due to conditions created by the war, namely the high price of labour, high freight rates, and a lack of tonnage. Instead, Currie defended Morris, saying that he was doing everything in his power to fix the coal situation. He congratulated Morris for his efforts to bring in several large shipments of coal, which he believed would provide ample coal to dealers for sale to the public.¹⁴⁵

In response to the *Daily News*' article, which dismissed the *Telegram*'s concerns over the price of coal, the *Evening Telegram* published a rebuttal. In this article, W.F. Lloyd, who also served as the editor for the *Telegram*, defended his position that the government had a duty to regulate coal prices. He said that even though there was a limited amount of coal in St. John's, many homeowners could not afford to buy coal because it was simply too expensive. As a member of the opposition and the editor of the *Evening Telegram*, Lloyd pledged the support of the opposition to "any reasonable measure or measures which will bring down the price of coal to the normal one." Lloyd told his readers he understood coal dealers were contractually obligated to provide coal to factories and industrial concerns at a set rate. Despite this, he said it was unacceptable for the dealers to raise their rates for residential coal in order to offset their flat rates for industries. Given the extreme necessity of coal during the winter, Lloyd declared that the Government desperately needed to intervene in the coal market to keep prices down.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ "The Coal Question," *Daily News*, 4 January 1916. In 1916 J.A. Robinson handed editorial control of the *Daily News* to John Currie.

¹⁴⁶ "Opposition Wiling to Aid in Coal Crisis," *Evening Telegram*, 4 January 1916.

On 4 January, the *Mail and Advocate* also weighed in on the controversy surrounding the price of coal. John St. John called the raise in price of soft coal to \$10.80 “barefaced robbery.” He opined that the rapid rise in coal prices targeted low income families, who had to purchase their coal on a weekly basis, while wealthier citizens were able to purchase coal for the whole winter before prices increased. Given the conditions of the war, St. John wholly agreed with the *Evening Telegram’s* call for the government to seize all stocks of coal and recommended the government sell this coal to the public for a maximum of \$6.50 a tonne.¹⁴⁷

The *Daily News* responded to these articles by the *Mail and Advocate* and the *Evening Telegram* on 5 January. In their rebuttal, John Currie reminded readers that a backlash was inevitable any time coal dealers raised prices. He admitted the *Telegram* and *Advocate’s* outrage would be justified if merchants manufactured the increase in coal prices to increase profits. Despite this, Currie argued that the increase in price was only natural given the increase in freight rates and decrease of available tonnage. He argued that the key to solving the coal famine in Newfoundland was to worry less about the price of coal and more about ensuring that there were adequate quantities of coal.¹⁴⁸

In addition to the *Daily News*, P.T. McGrath, editor of the *Evening Herald*, also defended the government against charges of failing to control the price of coal in Newfoundland. The *Mail and Advocate* quoted McGrath’s argument that the increase in price was designed to prevent people from using too much coal. Given the incredible scarcity of coal, McGrath said that an increase in price was in the best interest of the people,

¹⁴⁷ “The Coal Famine: Barefaced Robbery,” *Mail and Advocate*, 4 January 1916.

¹⁴⁸ “The Coal Problem,” *Daily News*, 5 January 1916.

because it would force them to ration coal and not burn through all of the Dominion's stocks.¹⁴⁹

Despite the protests of the *Daily News* and *Herald*, the *Mail and Advocate* was not convinced. In response, St. John referred to McGrath as a "rascal" and suggested that his arguments for high coal prices were nothing more than excuses to rob the poorest citizens of their hard earned money. Furthermore, the *Mail and Advocate* did not believe that coal dealers had to raise prices in order to break even. He accused coal dealers of being unpatriotic by trying to increase profits during a time of war:

Get off your despicable roosts and try to be men once during your miserable existence, and get coal for the poor at \$6.50 per ton, and give up excusing the rascality of men who on Monday demanded \$10.80 for what they were selling on Friday at \$8.00. What is the use of Governments in war times if a ship owner can ask \$5.00 for [freight that was] worth \$1.50 six months ago? If the enemy's warships had captured our carriers or gained mastery over our seas than all would calmly submit to the inevitable, but the only enemy encountered is the grabber of gold filtered from the miseries of the people under war conditions, when hundreds of the sons of those who are severest sufferers are dying for their King on foreign soil, thousands of miles from Home and Country.¹⁵⁰

St. John was unconvinced by McGrath's and Robinson's arguments and declared that only an idiot would believe that a rise in coal prices was necessary.

As these editors argued back and forth, they received letters from their readers supporting their positions. On 6 January, the *Mail and Advocate* published a letter from an author who went by the pseudonym "Reformer." Reformer thanked the editor of the *Mail and Advocate* for standing up to the government and attempting to fix what he described as "a situation the most brutal, the most horrible, and the most intolerable within our living

¹⁴⁹ "The Coal Famine: Barefaced Robbery," *Mail and Advocate*, 5 January 1916.

¹⁵⁰ "The Coal Famine: Barefaced Robbery," *Mail and Advocate*, 5 January 1916.

memories.” Reformer called on the government to intervene in the coal market to ensure that Newfoundlanders had even the most meagre standard of living. The author laid the blame for the situation on the shoulders of the coal dealers, who he accused of creating suffering and death in order to increase their profits. He maintained that their actions were far worse than atrocities of the German Army and Navy.¹⁵¹

While the *Evening Telegram* and *Mail and Advocate* were debating with the *Daily News* and *Evening Herald*, the Prime Minister was busy meeting with coal dealers and making arrangements to obtain enough reasonably priced coal to sustain Newfoundland for the winter. Morris’s plan began with 3,000 tonnes of coal, held in the stocks of various companies, which dealers would be allowed to sell for no more than \$8.00 a tonne. The government would import 6,000 tonnes of coal at a net cost of \$6.36 per tonne. The Newfoundland Produce Company (a division of Crosbie & Co.) would import 6,000 tonnes. All other coal dealers would work together to import an additional 6,000 tonnes of coal.¹⁵²

In addition to securing stocks of coal, Morris attempted to regulate the price of coal. He stipulated that all coal in the Dominion, as of January 1916, would be sold to the public at \$8.00 per tonne, in half tonne lots, to people in need of coal. The incoming coal would cost, on average, \$7.23 per tonne. To this price, Morris allowed coal dealers to add \$2.13 to the sale price to cover the cost of landing, storage, cartage, and duty, bringing the total to \$9.36. On top of this price, Morris also allowed coal dealers to add an additional 50¢ in

¹⁵¹ “The Cold-Blooded Dealers and Their Clever Planned Robbery,” *Mail and Advocate*, 6 January 1916.

¹⁵² “Outline for Adjusting Prices of Coal Until April 15th, 1916,” 6 January 1916, PANL, GN 8.67.

order for them to make a “reasonable profit.”¹⁵³ The government would split the 16,000 tonnes imported by themselves and the coal dealers proportionally between each of the companies for sale to the public.

Once Morris had solved the immediate issue of obtaining coal for the Dominion and fixing its price, he formed several committees to oversee the issue of coal for the duration of the war. To ensure that Newfoundland had an ample supply of coal and to control its price, Morris appointed William Coaker and M.P. Cashin, the People’s Party M.H.A. for Ferryland, to sit on a committee with him to determine the best way to keep the Dominion supplied with coal.¹⁵⁴ Morris was also eager to ensure that the limited stocks of coal were distributed evenly and to prevent the hoarding of coal. To do this, he appointed a six person Coal Committee. The government required any person wishing to buy coal to make an application to the Coal Committee outlining their reason for needing coal. If approved, the Coal Committee would only allow each household to purchase a half tonne of coal for domestic purposes.¹⁵⁵

While Progressives in the Dominion were pleased that Morris had placed a maximum price on coal, the coal dealers were not. On 8 January, J.R. Bennett, the Colonial Secretary, sent a letter to the major coal dealers in Newfoundland, informing them that they were required to sell their current stocks of coal for no less than \$8.00 per tonne. If they were not willing to agree to these prices, the government would seize all coal in the

¹⁵³ “Outline for Adjusting Prices of Coal Until April 15th, 1916,” 6 January 1916, PANL, GN 8.67.

¹⁵⁴ J.R. Bennett, Colonial Secretary, to Morey & Co., 8 January 1916, PANL, GN 8.67.

¹⁵⁵ “Public Notice: Sale of Coal,” 11 January 1916, PANL, GN 2.14.22.

Dominion and sell it to the public for a reasonable price.¹⁵⁶ In response, several of the coal dealers complained that they were not able to sell their current stocks of coal at \$8.00 a tonne.¹⁵⁷

A.H. Murray, a purveyor of coal, wrote to the Prime Minister to express his anger over the interference in coal prices. Murray told Morris he was angry that he was neither included in the discussion about obtaining coal nor the discussions about fixing the price. Murray was insistent his company had always treated people fairly and never withheld coal from the market to obtain a better price. He also informed Morris that under no circumstances would he be able to sell coal at \$8.00 a tonne and make a profit. He chided the Prime Minister for failing to provide coal to smaller coal dealers who often charged less than the larger firms.¹⁵⁸

Murray was not the only merchant who felt that he was unable to sell coal for \$8.00 a tonne. Many other coal dealers refused to sell coal for the price the government required and refused to lower their prices. As a result, the Executive Council met on 10 January and decided to seize all the existing stocks of coal in the Dominion and sell it at \$8.00 a tonne.¹⁵⁹

The response to the coal situation in Newfoundland was dependent on the political leanings of the newspapers. Progressive papers, like the *Mail and Advocate* and the *Evening Telegram*, argued that because of the conditions created by the war, the government had a responsibility to interfere in the coal market to ensure citizens had ample

¹⁵⁶ J.R. Bennett to A.J. Harvey & Co.; H.J Stabb & Co.; The United Coal Co.; The Newfoundland Produce Co.; Morey & Co.; T.A. Brown; and W.H. Hynes, 8 January 1918, in "Coal Problem," *Evening Telegram*, 10 January 1916.

¹⁵⁷ "The Coal Situation," *Mail and Advocate*, 10 January 1916.

¹⁵⁸ A.H. Murray to E.P Morris, 11 January 1916, PANL, GN 8.67.

¹⁵⁹ E.P. Morris to D.H. MacDougall, 13 January 1916, PANL, GN 8.67.

supplies of affordable coal. They believed this would provide low income citizens with a basic standard of living on par with the rest of the British Empire. These newspapers and their readers advocated that the government not only take an active role in importing coal but that they also regulate prices and even seize coal stocks to ensure that people had the necessities of life.

On the other hand, liberal newspapers like the *Daily News* and the *Evening Herald*, which represented business-class interests, demanded a much more limited response by the government. They contended the price of coal was not high because of the coal dealers' greed but because of the conditions of the war. A lack of tonnage and increased freight rates required coal to be sold at higher prices in order for merchants to earn a profit on their investments. They believed it was unproductive for the government to attempt to regulate prices when the conditions causing the high prices were out of their control. These newspapers advocated that the government focus less on the price of coal and more on importing sufficient quantities of coal for merchants to sell.

While liberals and Progressives disagreed about what the government should do about the coal crisis, both advocated for government involvement in a traditionally free market, though at different levels. While this rhetoric was par for the course for Progressives in Newfoundland, liberals had historically advocated for free markets, spared from government intrusion. The conditions of the war and wartime notions of patriotism, sacrifice, and service, convinced people of all political stripes that the government had a duty to ensure the people had access to the necessities of life. The demands of both liberals and Progressives for the government to intrude on free markets in the interest of the community show just how much liberalism had changed during the war.

The Price of Flour

The First World War affected more than just the price of coal. By early 1915, the price of food had risen dramatically. The price of potatoes, vegetables, salt, sugar, molasses, fresh meat, salted meat, milk, margarine, tea, bread, and flour skyrocketed. While all foodstuffs increased in price, the price of flour caused the greatest outrage amongst the public. The sensitivity over the price of flour was due to the reliance of many Newfoundlanders on white flour. Without the ability to produce flour or a significant quantity of vegetables, imported white flour was an important staple in the diets of most people.¹⁶⁰

From the very beginning of the war, the government realized that the conflict would have a negative impact on the cost of living. In 1914, the House of Assembly held an emergency war session to pass legislation to support the war effort. One bill passed in this session was *An Act to Enable to Governor in Council, During the Existence of a State of War, to take Possession of Food Stuffs Unreasonably Withheld*, otherwise known as the *Foodstuffs Act*. This bill allowed the Prime Minister to seize any stocks of food that merchants unreasonably withheld from the market and set a maximum price on any foodstuffs in order to keep the cost of living down.¹⁶¹ While Morris's administration had the tools to control prices in Newfoundland as early as 1914, it lacked the desire to do so.

¹⁶⁰ W.R. Aykroyd, "Beriberi and Other Food-Deficiency Diseases in Newfoundland," *Journal of Hygiene* 30, No. 3 (1930): 359-360; and Sean Cadigan, The role of agriculture in outport self-sufficiency, " in R.E. Ommer, ed, *The Resilient Outport* (St. John's: Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2002), 241-62.

¹⁶¹ *Acts of the General Assembly of Newfoundland Passed in the Fifth Year of the Reign of His Majesty King George V* (St. John's: J.W. Withers, 1914), 9.

Prior to the war, merchants sold flour for approximately \$5.00 a barrel.¹⁶² Within eight days of the declaration of war, residents worried that the war would cause flour shortages. In order to obtain enough flour for their families, people across the Dominion rushed to purchase as much flour as they could afford. As a result of the massive increase in demand and the fear of an increase in the price of flour on the international market, merchants increased their prices. By 12 August 1914, merchants in St. John's were selling flour for \$7.20 a barrel. The editor of the *Mail and Advocate* pleaded with people not to hoard flour as this caused prices to rise. He estimated that the increased cost would land flour merchants up to an additional \$60,000 in profits above what they would normally make. He called on the Prime Minister to intervene and prevent the flour dealers from getting rich by bleeding the poor dry during a time of war.¹⁶³

Despite the calls of the *Mail and Advocate*, reports came in across Newfoundland about flour hoarding. The increasing price of flour caused many wealthier citizens to purchase as much flour as they could afford, in fear of another price hike. In some communities, no flour was available because several wealthy residents had purchased the entirety of the merchant's stock. In other communities, where flour was being distributed to the poor, several men repeatedly visited to collect pans full of flour and had amassed several barrels to hoard for themselves.¹⁶⁴

In some ways, it is understandable that those who could afford to stock up on flour, would do so. In January 1915, the price of flour was \$7.50 a barrel and by February it had

¹⁶² Shannon Ryan, *The Ice Hunters: A History of Newfoundland Sealing to 1914* (St. John's: Breakwater Publishing, 1994), 10.

¹⁶³ "Flour," *Mail and Advocate*, 12 August 1914.

¹⁶⁴ Destitution," *Mail and Advocate*, 29 January 1915.

increased to \$8.50. Theobald, condemned flour merchants for this increase. He said that merchants were not basing the selling price of flour on what they paid for the flour but on what it would cost to replace that flour. Theobald surmised merchants were motivated by greed and argued that there was no reason they should increase prices on flour they already possessed, as the flour had already been purchased. He further criticized the flour merchants for their large donations to the Newfoundland Patriotic Association. He asked his readers: “What sacrifice is there in giving \$2,000 to the Patriotic Fund and making \$5,000 on flour purchased before the advance?”¹⁶⁵

The *Evening Telegram* was not the only newspaper to chastise flour merchants for making large donations to the NPA while increasing flour prices. On 16 February, the *Mail and Advocate* published an article attacking the “so called patriots” who were giving to the NPA with one hand, while robbing the poor with the other.¹⁶⁶ St. John said if the government was full of real patriots, than they would not allow unscrupulous merchants to make excessive profits by increasing the price of flour during a national struggle. By challenging the patriotism of flour merchants, the *Evening Telegram* and the *Mail and Advocate* let flour merchants know that merchants also had a role to play in the war effort: to provide food for the Dominion and to provide it at a reasonable price.

Throughout the rest of 1916, the price of flour continued to rise, reaching the unprecedented level of \$16 dollar a barrel by the spring of 1917.¹⁶⁷ Given the high cost of living, the *Mail and Advocate* urged the government to control food prices. St. John told

¹⁶⁵ “The Price of Flour,” *Evening Telegram*, 8 February 1915.

¹⁶⁶ “Patriots and Patriotism,” *Mail and Advocate*, 16 February 1915.

¹⁶⁷ “The Times,” *Evening Advocate*, 16 March 1917.

his readers that the advent of unrestricted submarine warfare was the reason for the massive increase in the price of flour from Canada. He recommended that the government take stock of all flour in the Dominion, make plans to ensure that supplies were adequate, and take measures to guarantee that all Newfoundlanders could afford the price of flour. The *Mail and Advocate*, also recommended the formation of a new social contract between citizens and the state, whereby the service to the state of male citizens would be repaid by the state looking after the welfare of all citizens. He urged the government to accept this contract, to ensure that soldiers knew that in their absence, the government would take care of their families.¹⁶⁸

The editor of the *Evening Telegram* also attacked merchants for the inflated price of flour in the Dominion. Unlike the *Mail and Advocate*, the *Evening Telegram*, did not believe there was much the government could do to regulate the price of food. H.A. Winter, the newly appointed editor of the *Evening Telegram*, contended that while the conditions of the war would naturally increase the price of food, merchants in Newfoundland could charge lower prices and still make a healthy profit. Winter proposed two solutions: first, the Newfoundland government pass a War Profits Tax, which would ensure that the more profit merchants made, the more taxes they paid; and second, a commission to investigate the cause of rapid increase in the cost of living and potential methods for lowering it.¹⁶⁹

As the price of flour increased, many people began to question the patriotism of the flour merchants. In a time when society expected every person to sacrifice in support of the war effort, many viewed it as a disgrace that the flour dealers were not willing to

¹⁶⁸ "Are We Prepared?" *Evening Advocate*, 2 February 1917.

¹⁶⁹ "Food Prices and Control," *Evening Telegram*, 13 April 1917.

sacrifice some of their profits to ensure that flour was affordable. The editor of the *Evening Advocate*, for instance, questioned why flour merchants were buying flour for \$11 a barrel and selling it for \$16. He accused the merchants of being unpatriotic and damaging the war effort, saying “we care not who the merchant is that will ask \$16.00 for the flour that cost him at the most \$12.00 – we challenge his patriotism, and class him in the same category as the German who ruthlessly ill-treats his enemies.”¹⁷⁰

Following the *Evening Advocate*’s attack on the flour merchants, they turned their sights on the government. Alexander Mews, the newly appointed editor of the *Evening Advocate*, cautioned the government that the price of flour was very likely to rise to \$18 or \$20 a barrel by the summer.¹⁷¹ Mews was adamant that the government had a duty to the people of Newfoundland that required them to step in and set a maximum price for flour. Mews argued that because the government asked young men to fight for the Empire, the government must to protect their parents and dependents from merchants trying to make money of the war:

This is not a time when the interests of business can be considered. The practice of unholy profits must give way to the call of the sacrifice that the young men are making to-day in Europe. If we ask them to give their lives for the Empire, the least that we can do is to prevent their parents from suffering hardships by reason of men who will not give up their monetary gains. It looks dangerously as if material interests were preferred to flesh and blood. People talk as if monetary loss were something worse than to risk the lives of our boys.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ “The Times,” *Evening Advocate*, 16 May 1917.

¹⁷¹ “The Flour Question,” *Evening Advocate*, 22 May 1917. In 1916 the *Mail and Advocate* was renamed the *Evening Advocate*, and Alexander Mews assumed the role of editor.

¹⁷² “The Flour Question,” *Evening Advocate*, 22 May 1917.

The High Cost of Living Commission and the Food Control Board

While everyone in Newfoundland agreed that the price of flour was growing out of control, the cause of the high prices and the solutions to these prices were hotly debated. The *Mail and Advocate*, for instance, believed that the reason for the increase in the price of flour was mostly due to flour merchants trying to capitalize on the war to make record profits. They believed the government should set a maximum price on flour to keep the prices from rising too high. On the other hand, the *Evening Telegram* thought that regulating prices was unproductive and the government could prevent merchants from price gouging by setting a tax on war profits. The *Telegram* worried that if the government attempted to strictly control the price of food, merchants would simply abandon their efforts to supply Newfoundland.¹⁷³ The *Daily News* believed that the merchants were receiving unwarranted abuse in the press because the war caused the price of the foodstuffs to rise and that was outside the government's control.¹⁷⁴

Despite public outrage, Prime Minister Morris seemed unconvinced that the price of food was a problem. Speaking in the House of Assembly, Morris stated that the high price of coal, flour, and salt showed that Newfoundland's economy was booming. He surmised that if people could not afford flour at current prices, then they would not buy it and the merchants would not import it. Morris reminded the House that prior to the war fisherman were getting, on average, \$6 per quintal of fish whereas during the war they were

¹⁷³ "The Commission's Report," *Evening Telegram*, 14 May 1917.

¹⁷⁴ "Food Commission," *Daily News*, 23 April 1917.

getting \$9. He said the increased price fishermen received for their fish balanced out the increased price that merchants were charging for the necessities of life.¹⁷⁵

William Coaker was not convinced by Morris's argument. While Coaker acknowledged that the price of fish had risen considerably, he contended that it had not increased enough to offset the ballooning price of food. Coaker estimated the price of fish would have to rise another \$3 per quintal, for a total of \$12 per quintal, if the people were to maintain an acceptable standard of living. He further attacked Morris for being more than willing to fix the price of coal in 1916, while being far too lenient with merchants who, in his estimation, had made \$2,000,000-\$3,000,000 from raising the price of food. Coaker called on Morris to do his duty as Prime Minister and defend the people against a rapidly rising cost of living. Finally, Coaker warned the House of Assembly that young men would not come forward and do their duty by enlisting in the Regiment or Naval Reserve if the government was not taking care of their wives and children.¹⁷⁶

Despite Coaker's arguments, and the outrage of the public, Morris remained unconvinced that the cost of living in Newfoundland was an issue. In order to get to the bottom of the matter, Morris appointed a High Cost of Living Commission (HCLC) to investigate the cause of the increased prices of all foodstuffs and other necessities. The HCLC comprised five members and was led by P.T. McGrath (the owner of the *Evening Herald* and a friend of Morris) and a Legislative Council Member. Morris tasked them with investigating the high prices of food, the food stocks in general, and with making any

¹⁷⁵ Journal of the House of Assembly, 30 May 1917.

¹⁷⁶ Journal of the House of Assembly, 31 May 1917.

recommendations they believed were necessary to ensure Newfoundland's food security.¹⁷⁷

By June of 1917, the HCLC had released three reports. The first two were related to coal and the third was related to the price of flour. Following their investigation, the HCLC determined that there were three main reasons for the drastic increase in flour prices. The first was that the increase was part of a general rise in prices due to a global wheat shortage. The HCLC acknowledged that neither the merchants nor the government could do anything in this regard. However, the Commission found that there were more local causes within the power of government to change: freight rates and mercantile price fixing. The HCLC reported that before the war, the Reid Company was charging roughly 20¢ in the summer and 30¢ in the winter to bring flour from North Sydney to various locations in Newfoundland. In 1917 that rate had inflated to \$1.28 per barrel. Similarly, prior to the war, The Red Cross Line was charging 25¢ to bring flour from Halifax and 26¢ from New York. By 1917 they were charging \$1.30 a barrel from Halifax and \$1.32 from New York. Despite these companies claiming that they had higher than normal operational expenses because of the war, the HCLC concluded that there was no justifiable reason for a 300% increase in shipping rates for flour. They further found that local merchants were setting the price of flour by international prices rather than on the basis of what they paid for their inventory. Indeed, the HCLC determined prices set by flour merchants had begun to exceed the international market and were earning them higher profits than before the war began. They reported that prior to the war, merchants were happy with making a profit of \$1 per

¹⁷⁷ "Action at Last," *Evening Telegram*, 21 April 1917.

barrel of flour. By 1916, it was not unusual for dealers to make \$4 or \$5 per barrel, which meant a 400-500% increase in profits.¹⁷⁸

In response to their report, the HCLC recommended that the government appoint a Food Control Board (FCB) to examine not only the prices and stocks of flour but the prices and stocks of all food in the Dominion. They suggested that the FCB's mandate should include: fixing prices; "conserving and distributing food during the progress of the war; making a complete and detailed survey of the whole food situation in the Colony; adopting measures prohibiting the storage of large quantities of food during the war; licensing distributors of all kinds of food; and establishing stands for flour to be imported." Finally, the HCLC recommended that the government adopt an Excess Profits Tax to discourage mercantile price gouging.¹⁷⁹

Newspapers in the Dominion reacted with mixed reviews to the findings and recommendations of the HCLC. The *Evening Telegram* congratulated the HCLC for exposing the causes for the increase in flour prices, but the newspaper was critical of the report's recommendations. H.A. Winter criticized the recommendation to construct a Food Control Board. He thought there was little an FCB could do to control prices without legislative power. Winter also criticized the HCLC for recommending steps to prevent the storage of large quantities of flour. He advised that large stores of flour would be the only thing that could insulate Newfoundland from rapidly increasing flour prices on the international market. Furthermore, Winter argued that the HCLC had bent to public opinion

¹⁷⁸ "Third Interim Report of Food Commission," *Evening Telegram*, 9 June 1917.

¹⁷⁹ "Third Interim Report of Food Commission," *Evening Telegram*, 9 June 1917. For more on the Excess Profits Tax, see Chapter 3.

and focused most of their efforts on the price of flour. He contended that supply and demand were causing the increased price of flour and the government could do nothing to combat that. Winter told his readers that the people were able to absorb the additional cost of flour but the biggest concern was maintaining a steady supply. He believed that the key to solving the flour problem was to consume less flour. For Winter and the *Evening Telegram*, the issue of flour was one of sacrifice, economy, and restraint. He was far more concerned with ensuring that every person had access to limited stocks of flour than in ensuring that everybody could afford as much flour as they did prior to the war.¹⁸⁰

The editorial stance of the *Evening Telegram* differed on the issue of flour prices in 1917 than it did on the issue of coal prices in 1916. This is due to the change in editors in June 1916 from W.F. Lloyd to H.A. Winter. While W.F. Lloyd was editor of the newspaper, the *Evening Telegram* displayed a Progressive bias. Advocating for low income citizens, Lloyd's *Telegram* called for the government to interfere in the coal market to regulate prices. Under H.A. Winter, the *Telegram* took on a much more liberal bias. In a reversal of its editorial opinion on coal, the *Evening Telegram* argued that the government was powerless to control flour prices and instead called for rationing to maintain adequate stocks.

The *Mail and Advocate* praised the HCLC for exposing the massive increases in profits charged by flour dealers. The newspaper attacked merchants, arguing it was unpatriotic for flour dealers to make record breaking profits while Newfoundland soldiers and sailors were being killed in the war.¹⁸¹ To fix this situation, the editor called on the

¹⁸⁰ "The Food Question," *Evening Telegram*, 9 June 1917.

¹⁸¹ "Revelations of the H.C.L. Commission," *Evening Advocate*, 12 June 1917.

government to regulate the prices of flour so that the producers could afford to feed their families. Unlike the *Evening Telegram*, the *Mail and Advocate* believed that having ample stocks of flour were useless unless every citizen could afford it.

In addition to the FPU, another organization expressed its concerns to the government over the price of food. On 15 June 1917, the Newfoundland Industrial Workers Association (NIWA) met at the Longshoremen's Protective Union (LSPU) Hall in St. John's and drafted a resolution for Prime Minister Morris.¹⁸² The NIWA informed the government that enormous increases in the cost of living were having a negative impact on its members. The Association chided the government for having the ability to regulate prices for the past two years but refusing to do so. The NIWA unanimously resolved to request that the government follow the recommendations of the HCLC and form a Food Control Board (FCB) to oversee the food situation and utilize the *Foodstuffs Act*. Fearing that any potential FCB would be overrun by the business class, they further recommended that the board consist of 15 members, with no less than two thirds coming from trades, labour, fishing, and industrial organizations.¹⁸³ The NIWA admitted that some representation of the flour merchants was necessary on the FCB, but they recommended that the flour merchants distance themselves from anyone hoping to make excessive profits from the war:

We suggest to [the flour dealers] that they cast forth from among them, as lepers and pariahs, any individuals who stand convicted by a legally constituted court of enquiry, of the crime of extortion at a time when all classes are bearing the burden placed on them by this great and terrible war, while blood and treasure are being

¹⁸² For more on the NIWA, and their reaction to the cost of living see: Peter McInnis, "All Solid Along the Line: The Reid Newfoundland Strike of 1918," *Labour / Le Travail* 26 (Fall 1990), 61-84.

¹⁸³ M.H. Hitchen, Secretary NIWA to E.P. Morris, 15 June 1917, PANL, GN 8.89.

freely spent that men may live in peace and freedom, at such a time certain persons have been so unpatriotic as to add greatly to the burden and take out of the mouths of mothers and children the very bread to secure which our soldiers suffer and die.¹⁸⁴

While the Morris administration was reluctant to interfere in the flour markets, political developments in 1917 would increase the government's willingness to do so. By 1917, Morris's administration was having great difficulty maintaining the Newfoundland Regiment, and it began to seem that conscription would be necessary. In addition to this, the public was outraged at the high cost of living and the profiteering outlined in the HCLC. Morris knew that he would need the support of all political parties to solve these issues. In July, Morris approached Lloyd and Coaker about forming a national government of all parties. Lloyd and Coaker accepted this deal, and on 17 July 1917 Morris announced he would dissolve the People's Party and a national government would be formed. Cabinet positions would be appointed from all three major parties.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ M.H. Hitchen, Secretary NIWA to E.P. Morris, 22 June 1917, PANL, GN 8.89.

¹⁸⁵ "The National Government," *Evening Advocate*, 17 July 1917; The issue of a national government was rather complicated. In September of 1914, William Coaker suggested that all parties work together to support the war effort and recommended the formation of a national government under the leadership of Edward Morris. The government rejected this proposal. In June of 1917, when Morris first proposed the formation of a national government, Coaker vehemently opposed this idea, and rejected it. Coaker subsequently attacked Morris, arguing that Morris turned down his offer for a national government in 1914, and was only making the offer in 1917 because he feared losing the upcoming election, and wanted to retain his position as Prime Minister by any means necessary. Coaker contended that Morris's attempts at forming a National Government amounted to nothing more than a violation of the voting rights of Newfoundlanders. In a bizarre reversal of his opinion, after adamantly opposing the idea, Coaker agreed to support a National Government in July. Coaker explained this radical shift in position to FPU members by suggesting that the national government would not be a continuation of the current government, but a formation of an entirely new government. For more on formation of a national government see: "Is Sir Edward Morris to Say 'You Shall not Vote,'" *Evening Advocate*, 5 June 1917; "Discreditable Tory Tactics," *Evening Advocate*, 19 June 1917; and "A Demand for an Election," *Evening Advocate*, 1 July 1917.

The formation of a national government stimulated government interest in tackling the issue of the rising cost of living. On 20 July, Morris introduced the *Trading in the Necessaries of Life Bill*. The Prime Minister told the House of Assembly that he intended this Bill to control the prices of any commodities that might be considered a necessity of life including food, coal, salt, fuels, and animal feed. Morris followed the recommendations of the HCLC and created an FCB. Morris told the house that the FCB would have the authority to investigate the amount of food in the Dominion, who held stocks of food, and what prices they were charging; set maximum prices on anything that could be considered a necessity of life; prevent wastage of the necessities of life; encourage the production of food and other necessities of life; and purchase or seize stocks of food to be stored, sold, and delivered by the FCB to the people of Newfoundland. In discussing his reasoning for the creating the FCB, Morris joined with public sentiment and condemned merchants who had been earning excess profits during the war. He accused profiteers of being every bit as evil as the Germans. In concluding his speech on the high cost of living in Newfoundland, Morris explained that his government had previously wanted to take action on this issue but they felt it was necessary to investigate what measures other countries had taken before drafting policy for Newfoundland. Despite this, Morris maintained that he was now ready to do whatever was necessary in the interest of the public.¹⁸⁶

Although the House of Assembly universally supported this bill, there was opposition in the Legislative Council. During the Legislative Council's second reading of this bill, A.J. Harvey attempted to defend the high prices that merchants had been charging

¹⁸⁶ Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 20 July 1917.

for flour. Harvey argued that such prices were necessary to ensure that Newfoundland had adequate supplies of food. Furthermore, Harvey told the Council that flour merchants were using their increased profits on flour to reinvest in the Dominion. In particular, he said the increased profit was necessary to replace tonnage that merchants sold to the Russian government.¹⁸⁷ Harvey's argument that flour profits were necessary to replace steamers sold to the Russian government was bizarre. His Company, A.J. Harvey & Co., sold three of their steamers to the Russian government for a hefty profit. It seems unusual that Harvey would try and convince the Legislative Council that he required to charge more for flour to offset the sale of his steamers, on which he made a tremendous profit. In essence, Harvey wanted the taxpayers to pay for new steamers for his company.

Despite Harvey's protest, the Legislative Council was not convinced. On the final reading of the bill, P.T. McGrath argued that a Food Control Board was necessary to ensure that Newfoundland had sufficient stocks of food for the duration of the war. McGrath also told the Council he believed the role of the FCB would be to focus much more on obtaining adequate supplies of food and encouraging people to ration what food is available, than on fixing prices.¹⁸⁸ The bill was passed in both houses and became law in August of 1917. Much to the disappointment of the NIWA, the board only consisted of three people, none of which came from any labour organization. The FCB would consist of P.T. McGrath, as the Chairman; Henry Le Messurier a former Reform Party M.H.A. for Burin, and George Grimes, an FPU M.H.A. for Port de Grave.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Proceedings of the Legislative Council, 24 July 1917.

¹⁸⁸ Proceedings of the Legislative Council, 26 July 1917.

¹⁸⁹ M.H. Hitchens to E.P. Morris, 27 July 1917, PANL, GN 8.89.

Flour Rationing and Substitutes

Once the Prime Minister appointed the FCB, they quickly set about determining Newfoundland's requirements for flour to ensure merchants could purchase enough to feed the Dominion. By the latter half of 1917, many in Newfoundland believed there was going to be a great shortage of flour in the winter. In August, the *Evening Telegram* reported that the United States and Canada were 400,000,000 bushels of wheat short of the target they were supposed to supply to their allies. Winter told his readers that every other Allied country had either voluntary or compulsory rationing programs while Newfoundland did not. He expressed dismay that the Dominion should be eating more than its share of flour, while all other countries were making sacrifices for the war effort. Winter implored the FCB to start a program of rationing. He hypothesized that if Newfoundland did not control its own flour consumption, William Hanna (the Canadian Food Controller) and Herbert Hoover (head of the United States Food Administration) would restrict the amount of flour they would export to Newfoundland. Winter believed Hanna and Hoover could reduce Newfoundland's flour imports from 400,000 barrels to 320,000 barrels a year. In Winter's mind, rationing was not just a practical method for saving flour but a patriotic duty required of every citizen in the British Empire.¹⁹⁰

P.T. McGrath confirmed Winter's fears that the United States and Canada would restrict the amount of flour available to Newfoundland when he travelled to Ottawa to meet with William Hanna to obtain Newfoundland's winter stock of flour. In this meeting,

¹⁹⁰ "Need of Economy," *Evening Telegram*, 29 August 1917.

Hanna told McGrath that Canada had set a goal of reducing flour consumption from 6.25 bushels per person a year to 4.75. He recommended that Newfoundland embrace similar reductions. McGrath told Hanna that such a large reduction would be impossible in Newfoundland, but the Dominion could reduce consumption by ten percent if they increased potato production to offset the decrease in flour. McGrath informed Governor Davidson that even such a moderate decrease in flour would be very unpopular.¹⁹¹

Once McGrath had relayed this information to the governor, Davidson requested that W.F. Lloyd appeal to the people of Newfoundland to conserve flour. Davidson hoped that the government could encourage people to consume less flour by making them realize how their sacrifice would make life easier for allied soldiers fighting in Europe. He hoped the people of Newfoundland would follow the lead of the United States and substitute a pound of potatoes for a pound of flour per week for every person in a household. He was confident that the wheat saved through these substitutes could better feed soldiers and help win the war.¹⁹²

In order to encourage Newfoundlanders to substitute potatoes for flour, the Agricultural Board made loaves of potato bread and sent them around to local businesses and newspapers to prove that potato bread was not only a great way to save flour but was delicious as well. Their recipe replaced either a third or a quarter of the flour in the recipe with potato.¹⁹³ Mews, was not impressed with the Board's potato bread. In the *Evening Advocate*, he described the bread as "moist and slightly heavier than some like, but they

¹⁹¹ P.T. McGrath to W.E. Davidson, 7 September 1917, PANL, GN 2.14.30.

¹⁹² W.E. Davidson to W.F. Lloyd, 10 September 1917, PANL, GN 2.14.62.

¹⁹³ "Potato Flour," *Evening Telegram*, 27 September 1917.

show the possibility of saving flour.”¹⁹⁴ Mews was measured in his promotion for this bread, suggesting “it may not be advisable for all to use this bread, but those who are healthy can certainly adopt it with profit to themselves, and bring assistance to the more economic use of flour.”¹⁹⁵

H.A. Winter, gave a much more positive review of the Agricultural Board’s potato bread in the *Evening Telegram*. Winter described the bread as only slightly heavier than normal bread and tasting very slightly different to whole wheat bread. He further described the bread as “very palatable” and suggested that many would prefer potato bread to whole wheat bread. He advocated that replacing flour with potato was an excellent way to conserve flour. Winter concluded this article by calling on the women of Newfoundland to improve potato bread recipes and find more ways to conserve flour, arguing that it was a way for women to “exhibit a most useful and practical patriotism.”¹⁹⁶

Despite the efforts of the Agricultural Board, Newfoundlanders did not reduce their flour consumption by any significant amount. As a result, the government put additional pressure on the people to reduce their flour consumption. On 12 October, newspapers across the Dominion published the following announcement on behalf of the Governor and the Acting Prime Minister. It informed the people that Canada and the United States would be 400,000,000 bushels short of the requirements for the war effort. They implored everyone to reduce flour consumption and rely on potatoes crops that citizens could grow at home. Furthermore, Lloyd and Davidson insisted that every pound of flour that

¹⁹⁴ “Potatoes and Flour,” *Evening Advocate*, 27 September 1917.

¹⁹⁵ “Potatoes and Flour,” *Evening Advocate*, 27 September 1917.

¹⁹⁶ “Potato Flour,” *Evening Telegram*, 27 September 1917.

Newfoundland saved would help win the war effort. This message tapped into powerful wartime conceptions of sacrifice and patriotism to convince people that they had a duty to conserve flour to help bring about the end of the war by ensuring that allied soldiers were well fed.

Local newspapers supported the government's plea for Newfoundlanders to conserve flour. The flour situation worsened over the winter of 1917 and many believed stocks of flour would not last until the summer. Alexander Mews implored readers of the *Evening Advocate* to conserve flour, stating that those on the home front had a duty to conserve flour just as young men had a duty to enlist with the Regiment. He warned that if people did not cut their flour usage by a quarter, it was very likely that there would be no flour at all from May to October.¹⁹⁷ Frustrated with the unwillingness of people to reduce their flour consumption, Mews labelled anyone who failed to do so as a traitor not only to Newfoundland but to the basic principles of Christianity.¹⁹⁸

Similarly, the editor of the *Evening Telegram* also seemed concerned that the people of Newfoundland did not understand how serious the global wheat shortage was. Winter recommended that everyone should endeavour to substitute a portion of potato or other grains for a portion of their flour, to dedicate one day a week to abstain from eating any food that contained flour, and have one meal per day that was free of flour. He reminded his readers that the United States had already made these sacrifices to ensure that soldiers had enough food on the front lines. Winter expressed disgust with the waste and

¹⁹⁷ "The Flour Situation," *Evening Advocate*, 14 December 1917.

¹⁹⁸ "Must be Faced," *Evening Advocate*, 14 December 1917.

extravagance of food in the Dominion and called on the FCB to enforce rationing if people could not control their own consumption.¹⁹⁹

In a last-ditch effort to encourage Newfoundlanders to substitute other grains for flour, the FCB held a Victory War Bread Show at the British Hall in St. John's. The objective of this show was to "encourage the baking by the housewives of St. John's of bread, cake, buns, etc. containing substitutes for wheat flour, so as to lessen the consumption of the latter and thereby release more for the use of the Allies." There were four categories to this competition and the prizes comprised a barrel of flour for first place in each category and a half barrel of flour for second place in each category.²⁰⁰

The Victory War Bread Show was quite popular and over 350 contestants entered the competition. Despite the popularity of the show, it did not motivate many people to reduce the amount of flour they used. Throughout the latter part of 1917 and early 1918, there were various reports of people hoarding flour across the Dominion. The *Evening Advocate* received reports that many women were purchasing large amounts of flour, from many different stores, in order to hide their hoarding.²⁰¹ The *Twillingate Sun* reported that government officials on the West Coast were hoarding large amounts of flour in their basements.²⁰² Similarly, the *Harbour Grace Standard* reported that some people in the Conception Bay area were hoarding multiple barrels of flour.²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ "Save Food!" *Evening Telegram*, 27 December 1917.

²⁰⁰ "Victory War Bread Show," *Evening Telegram*, 9 March 1918.

²⁰¹ "Only A Week Left," *Evening Advocate*, 20 December 1917.

²⁰² "A Few Observations by Observer," *Twillingate Sun*, 13 June 1918.

²⁰³ "The Present Wheat Flour Campaign: Commenced Several Weeks Ago," *Harbour Grace Standard*, 11 October 1918.

Seemingly unable to convince the public to significantly reduce their flour consumption, the FCB took action. On 1 July, they enacted new regulations designed to reduce the consumption of wheat flour. Foremost amongst these regulations was the legal requirement for every person selling flour to sell one pound of substitutes (oatmeal, cornmeal, etc.) to a customer for every four pounds of wheat flour (20%). Similarly, the FCB also required anyone who used flour to use 20% substitutes to 80% wheat flour in all their baking:

- (a) Every Merchant, planter, trader, broker, commission agent, provision dealer, grocer, shop-keeper, or any other person in Newfoundland who shall sell or deliver to any other person any wheat flour, shall only do so in the proportion of not less than one pound of substitutes to every four pounds of wheat flour.
- (b) Every person in Newfoundland who makes for public or private consumption bread, rolls, cake, pastry, or other product in which wheat flour is used shall, in making the same, use not less than one pound of substitutes to every four pounds of wheat flour.²⁰⁴

To ensure that merchants were indeed selling the required substitutes with flour, the FCB prohibited any merchant from selling flour if they did not have enough substitutes to go with it. If the Newfoundland Constabulary, a Peace Officer, or an agent of the FCB caught anyone with baked goods containing less than 20% substitutes, they would seize and destroy the offending food. The penalty for baking without substitutes or for selling flour without substitutes was an exorbitant fine of up to \$1000, imprisonment for a period not exceeding three months, or both.²⁰⁵

The Substitutes Act enraged the majority of the island by forcing them to consume substitutes. Just five days after the regulation became law, the *Evening Advocate* expressed

²⁰⁴ “Published by Authority,” *Evening Telegram*, 10 July 1918.

²⁰⁵ “Published by Authority,” *Evening Telegram*, 10 July 1918.

dismay that people were complaining about the government forcing them to purchase flour substitutes. Mews said that Newfoundlanders had never understood the seriousness of the food situation. He argued that the people were so accustomed to a life of luxury that even small sacrifices for the war effort seemed like starvation rations. Mews reminded his readers that authorities in Canada and in the United States were limiting the amount of flour that could be exported to Newfoundland and would not allow any exportation of wheat flour without the importation of flour substitutes. He concluded his article by stating that if people want to blame anyone for having to purchase substitutes, they should blame the Kaiser.²⁰⁶

The *Harbour Grace Standard* also expressed annoyance with the flour regulations. On 11 October 1918, the editor of the *Standard* wrote an article explaining the trouble with the regulation. He opined that many in Newfoundland realized that saving flour was necessary, patriotic, and sensible but were having trouble giving up old habits. Furthermore, the editor explained that even though many people knew saving flour would benefit them, they despised the government for forcing them to eat food that was traditionally fed to animals and were therefore not committed to following the regulation. Showing just how unpopular substitutes like cornmeal and oatmeal were, the editor explained that it was a widespread practice in Conception Bay for people to eat the white flour and feed the substitutes to their animals.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ "Blame the Kaiser," *Evening Advocate*, 15 July 1918.

²⁰⁷ "The Present Wheat Flour Campaign: Commenced Several Weeks Ago," *Harbour Grace Standard*, 11 October 1918.

The *Harbour Grace* standard also complained that Standard Flour was not well suited for making palatable bread and required an expert baker to turn it into suitable loaves.²⁰⁸ When people added substitutes to the Standard Flour, the editor argued that the bread became even worse. He recommended that if the government knew how to make edible bread with a flour substitute, than they should educate the population on how to make this bread and only allow merchants to sell substitutes that make acceptable bread.

Having received the *Harbour Grace Standard's* criticisms, the FCB wrote a response, which the *Evening Telegram* published. In response to the claim that Standard Flour did not make good bread, the FCB reminded the *Standard*, that pre-war white flour included 72% of the wheat berry, while war flour contained only 76%, which only amounted to a 4% increase in bran and germ. Meanwhile, the editor informed the *Standard* that in Britain war flour comprised 83% of the wheat germ and bran to which that they added 20% of flour substitute and this did not cause the British people any harm. He added that the Americans, Canadians, and British were all using the same flour that Newfoundlanders had access to, they were all mixing in the same amount of substitute, and the bread in each country was perfectly edible.²⁰⁹

The requirement to purchase and use 20% substitutes with every amount of flour, though unpopular, continued throughout the war and remained in place until February of 1919. Though the regulation was unpopular during the war, the people of Newfoundland

²⁰⁸ "The Present Wheat Flour Campaign: Commenced Several Weeks Ago," *Harbour Grace Standard*, 11 October 1918. During the war, Canada and the United States began to include more wheat bran and germ with the endosperm to create a more economical whole wheat flour. The majority of the flour imported into Newfoundland during the war was of this variety. It was variously called Standard Flour, Victory Flour, or War Flour.

²⁰⁹ "Flour and Substitutes," *Evening Telegram*, 25 October 1918.

begrudgingly followed it. When the war concluded, the FCB, much to the anger of the majority of Newfoundland, required citizens to continue to purchase substitutes. As a result, opposition to the policy reached a fever pitch as citizens wrote many angry letters to their newspaper editors. The strongest opponent of the substitute's regulation was H.M. Mosdell, editor of the *Daily Star*. In December 1918, Mosdell published a series of articles calling on the government to end the much-hated regulation. When he received no reply, he attacked the government, demanding to know why they would force the people of Newfoundland to continue to eat grain that he claimed was unfit for human consumption:

...The people of Newfoundland are still forced by the local authorities to use twenty per cent of this hog food with all the flour they consume. Some flour importers assert that the people of this country will still be using this HOG FEED when another Christmas season rolls around. The [*Evening Advocate*] can tell us where this is a true presentation of the food outlook ahead for this country. It can tell us when we are likely to be relieved of the irksome regulations calling for the use of HOG FEED with our flour. It can tell us if supplies of flour will be issued next spring to outport customers and to city householders without the twenty per cent accompaniment of HOG FEED...²¹⁰

It seems that while Mosdell may have deemed it necessary to eat what he considered animal food during the war, when the fight was over, he could no longer tolerate it.

In response to Mosdell's attacks against the FCB, Geoff Grimes published a rebuttal in the *Evening Advocate*. Addressing the accusation that flour substitutes were only fit for pigs to eat, Grimes informed Mosdell, in a most cheeky tone, that he had eaten substitutes for the duration of the war, to no ill effects:

Sir, I have noticed in recent editorials that you have much to say about hog feed, and having eaten more than one meal of this feed (rolled oats, corn meal, etc.) as a breakfast food, and as a constituent part for bread to the extent of one part to four, I find that it did not produce within me any of the hog propensities for wallowing in mire. I do not know what kind you may be using, but I am inclined

²¹⁰ "We Emulate Job," *Daily Star*, 27 December 1918.

to think from your editorials that if you are using any you must have struck a bad barrel or sack somewhere. ²¹¹

Grimes told Mosdell that the only reason the substitutes regulations prevailed was that merchants were unable to obtain enough white flour to feed the Dominion. As soon as they obtained adequate supplies, the FCB would lift the regulation.²¹² On 1 February 1919, the *Evening Advocate* shared the news that the substitute regulations were over and rejoiced in the fact that Mosdell no longer had to share a meal with his pigs.

Foods for a World War: Seal Meat, Cods Heads, and Potatoes

Given the scarcity of flour during the war, many argued that it was the patriotic duty of citizens to economize in every way possible. They urged people to eliminate waste, grow as much of their own food as possible, and investigate foods that were unpopular or uneaten before the war. Food economy was part of a reciprocal relationship between citizens and the state, whereby the government would provide citizens with as much flour as they could obtain, while the citizens would do their bit to rely on that flour as little as possible.

One of the first methods of economizing, suggested by citizens, was to eliminate waste from the cod fishery.²¹³ In October of 1914, the editor of the *Western Star* reported

²¹¹ "An Open Letter to Dr. H.A. Mosdell, by a Member of the Board of Food Control," *Evening Advocate*, 3 January 1919.

²¹² "An Open Letter to Dr. H.A. Mosdell, by a Member of the Board of Food Control," *Evening Advocate*, 3 January 1919.

²¹³ The argument that Newfoundland ought to eliminate waste from the cod fishery predates the debate that occurred during the First World War. For more on this see: Sean Cadigan, *Hope and Deception in Conception Bay: Merchant-Settler Relations in Newfoundland, 1785-1855* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

that it was common practice for fishermen on the west coast of Newfoundland to throw away the cod's heads, sounds (the swim bladder), and tongues after the fish had been split. Andrew Barrett, editor for the *Western Star*, advised there were markets opening during the war that would accept large volumes of heads, tongues, and cheeks. In addition, Barrett condemned the waste of this food: "At this time when salt junk is selling from 14 to 16 cents per pound, and the price of other food stuffs soaring to the moon, it certainly is a pity that some effort is not being made to utilize such palatable by products of the codfishery."²¹⁴ He estimated that if a fisherman caught 360 pounds of fish, which would produce a quintal of salt cod, the value of the quintal would be \$6.50, while the value of the heads, tongues, sounds, backbones, roe, and liver would be worth \$1.41. Given Newfoundland's rough catch of 1,500,000 quintals a year, Barrett estimated that fishermen dumped over \$2,000,000 worth of fish into the water each year, an unacceptable waste during the war.²¹⁵

Despite the pleas of the *Western Star*, it does not seem that many fishermen began retaining the by-products of the fishery. Throughout the war, the *Western Star* published several articles declaring that Newfoundlanders were among the most wasteful people on the planet for discarding so much of the cod.²¹⁶ At the end of the war, Barrett published an account of a boy named Harvey Sharp from Cow Head who managed to make \$65.50, in the summer of 1918, by cutting out and selling cod heads and tongues before they were thrown into the water. He argued that the work of saving these valuable articles of the fish

²¹⁴ "Cod Tongues and Sounds: An Annual Waste," *Western Star*, 28 October 1918.

²¹⁵ "Our Annual Waste: Over 20 Per Cent of Codfishery Thrown Away," *Western Star*, 15 July 1914.

²¹⁶ "Stop the Waste," *Western Star*, 24 October 1917.

could be done by women and children in an effort to create additional food and bring in more money for the family.²¹⁷

While the *Western Star* called on fishermen to save cod heads, tongues, and sounds, others were calling for fishermen to bring back another large source of meat: seal flippers and carcasses. The campaign to bring back seal meat began in 1915 when an author writing under the pseudonym “Economy” wrote a letter to the editor of the *Evening Telegram* to complain about the amount of seal meat wasted every year. Economy pointed out that during the last season, fishermen harvested 250,000 seals. He used the average weight of a seal (50 lbs) to estimate that 12,500,000 pounds of “fresh wholesome food” was destroyed. During a time when food prices were sky rocketing and food was getting scarce, Economy believed it should be illegal to waste such vast quantities of food:

...we are guilty of one of the greatest human crimes, destroying such lots of fresh wholesome food when millions of poor people re crying for bread. What a difference it would make in the homes of the poor in this country during the next year if one million pounds of fresh meat were brought in before the 1st of April and distributed for a few cents a pound to those who needed it. If there was once an excuse for such criminal waste, it has ceased now, when bread and meat are so dear, and when we hear so much of the poverty prevailing.²¹⁸

Economy called on the government to intervene in the seal fishery and find some way for the sealing fleets to bring back the valuable meat they left on the ice.²¹⁹

Theobald agreed with Economy and said that fishermen were wasting a tremendous amount of wholesome food on the ice. He interviewed a local sealer who reported that seal meat was “splendid” and said that he took some home every year and fried it with onions.²²⁰

²¹⁷ “A Lesson on Industry,” *Western Star*, 5 March 1919.

²¹⁸ “Abundance of Good Food Thrown Away,” *Evening Telegram*, 6 March 1915.

²¹⁹ “Abundance of Good Food Thrown Away,” *Evening Telegram*, 6 March 1915.

²²⁰ “The Thoughts of Theobald,” *Evening Telegram*, 20 March 1915.

Theobald believed that if the government could arrange for cold storage in St. John's, seal carcasses could be a very valuable source of food to sustain the Dominion and make it more self-reliant.

In 1918, the rapidly increasing cost of food caused the demands for seal meat to increase. In February, Patriot, a columnist for the *Evening Telegram*, praised the United States for supposedly attempting to substitute whale meat for beef, pork, and chicken. Given that the U.S. was looking for new sources of food, Patriot asked why nobody had attempted to bring in the nutritious flippers and carcasses from the ice. In particular, Patriot praised the flippers of Whitecoat seals to be the most palatable of all seal meat. He recommended that a ship, fitted with a canning operation, follow the sealing fleet so it could pick up and can Whitecoat flippers for human consumption.²²¹

The editor of the *Western Star* also expressed concern that Newfoundland was not utilizing all of its natural resources. Barret claimed that the U.S. were doing everything they could to reduce beef consumption, including eating whale, shark, and even the "long despised and rejected dogfish." Barrett reminded his readers that while the U.S. was making such efforts, Newfoundland was leaving roughly 250,000 carcasses and flippers on the ice every year. This would have been enough to provide every household with multiple carcasses. Barrett urged the government to use the War Measures Act to compel sealing vessels to bring seal carcasses back along with the pelts. He admitted that forcing sealing vessels would be an inconvenience for the industry but reminded readers that many soldiers were making the ultimate sacrifice. Finally, Barrett expressed his belief that the \$50 cost

²²¹ "Thoughts Upon the Times," *Evening Telegram*, 7 February 1918.

per barrel of salt beef would make fresh seal meat a welcome addition to many people's diets, and that the taste of seal meat was far preferable to the "salt junk" that merchants imported from the United States.²²²

On 15 February, the *Harbour Grace Standard* added its voice to the list of newspapers calling for fishermen to bring seal meat back from the ice. The editor recommended the FCB work with the owners of sealing vessels to arrange for the harvest of meat. He said that having a cheap source of fresh meat was important because salt beef and pork had become so expensive that many could not afford to eat meat.²²³ The editor said that it was a sin to waste food and a greater sin "against God and man" to waste food during times of war. In March, the *Evening Telegram* also called on the government to arrange for sealing vessels to bring meat to St. John's. He admitted that seal was not a popular food in Newfoundland but added that everyone in the Dominion had tasted seal flippers at least once in their lives. He insisted that despite the unpopularity of seal, people did not have a choice anymore and all food had to be utilized to prevent starvation.²²⁴

Despite the optimism of the *Evening Telegram*, *Western Star*, and *Harbour Grace Standard*, the *Evening Advocate* remained skeptical that seal meat was a solution to Newfoundland's food situation. Mews said that even if sealers could bring back meat from the ice, nobody would eat it unless they could not afford any other food. The editor argued that if the seal meat could be brought back from the ice, which he was also skeptical of, it

²²² "Stop the Waste," *Western Star*, 13 February 1918. The spiny dogfish was a much hated species in Newfoundland as they were notorious for destroying fishing gear.

²²³ No Title, *Harbour Grace Standard*, 15 February 1918.

²²⁴ "Our National Foods," *Evening Telegram*, 8 March 1918.

would be difficult to secure sufficient cold storage to store enough meat to feed the Dominion.²²⁵

Given all of the press coverage on the issue of seal meat, the FCB decided to investigate. They interviewed Captain Abram Kean about the possibility of harvesting seal carcasses and flippers. Kean informed the FCB that it was out of the question to bring in carcasses. Firstly, Kean told the FCB sealers could earn far more money from the pelts than they could the carcasses. To compensate sealers for their time people would have to pay a prohibitively high price for meat. Kean also said that keeping the meat from spoiling until it could be landed in St. John's would also be impossible.²²⁶ Following Kean's interview with the FCB, the issue of harvesting seal meat was not considered feasible and newspapers dropped the issue.

Despite the failure of the public calls for the use of cod heads, sounds, tongues, seal flippers and carcasses, there was one initiative that was successful: the planting of potatoes. While potatoes were in no way a new food when the war began, the high price of flour created a movement that urged Newfoundlanders to increase potato production to reduce food imports to the Dominion. The first calls to increase potato planting came from the *Mail and Advocate* in 1915. The editor urged the government to encourage and support Newfoundlanders in planting as many potatoes as possible. Stressing the importance of providing the Dominion with food, he declared that farmers could serve the Empire by planting potatoes:

War cannot be fought unless the soldiers are fed, and who is to feed them if not the farmers, and non-combatants have a right to be fed as well as the fighters. After all

²²⁵ "Saving Seal Meat," *Evening Advocate*, 9 March 1918.

²²⁶ "Statement of Captain Kean," *Evening Advocate*, 9 March 1918.

the soldiers cannot go to war unless the producers, who do not fight, keep up their producing. The farm hand and the factory hand is doing his share, for he must feed and pay the soldier, as well as clothe him, and find him guns and gun-powder.²²⁷

Because citizens had to enlist, support soldiers, and otherwise support the war effort, the editor insisted that the government had a duty to help Newfoundlanders feed themselves and the best way to do that was through the encouragement of potato planting.²²⁸

As the war progressed, farming became wrapped up in the concept of a total war effort. In 1916, the *Mail and Advocate*, argued that everyone must find a way to contribute to the war effort. The newspaper said that young men must come forward to enlist, merchants and shipping concerns must not seek excess profits, and the government must compel anyone owning land to plant as many vegetables as they could.²²⁹ He believed that if people planted enough vegetables, Newfoundland would require fewer food imports. By using the language of a total war effort, the editor implied that the state required every single person to work together to win the war effort. This turned the act of planting potatoes into an act national service.

In 1917, the fear of U-Boat attacks against Newfoundland caused an increase in calls for increased potato production. As a result, the Agricultural Board began to advocate that all Newfoundlanders plant potatoes. In an advertisement appearing in the *Evening Telegram*, the Agricultural Board argued Newfoundland's dependence on food imports made it vulnerable to a blockade by German U-boats, which could block off food imports and result in starvation.²³⁰ They implored citizens to plant as many potatoes as they could,

²²⁷ "Sow More Seeds," *Mail and Advocate*, 25 February 1915.

²²⁸ "Sow More Seeds," *Mail and Advocate*, 25 February 1915.

²²⁹ "The Country Must Prepare," *Mail and Advocate*, 29 November 1916.

²³⁰ "Agriculture," *Evening Telegram*, 5 March 1917.

believing that surplus of potatoes was the only thing that could protect the Dominion from a U-Boat blockade.

Governor Davidson also joined in the efforts to encourage the production of potatoes. In March of 1917, Davidson wrote letters to religious leaders across the island, requesting that they encourage their parishioners to plant potatoes. He informed them that the Agricultural Board was doing everything it could, but he believed that their efforts would fall short of their goal unless Newfoundland's religious leadership, who were in regular contact with the people, stressed the importance of the Dominion growing its own food.²³¹

As the war progressed, the Agricultural Board increasingly told the citizens that planting potatoes was a patriotic duty. They said Newfoundlanders owed a duty to God and the British Empire to help win the war and ensure "the triumph of Christian ideals and of justice over the inhuman and semi-barbarous procedures of our enemies."²³² In addition, the Agricultural Board suggested that if Newfoundland did not grow enough food they could bring shame to the Dominion by requiring support from Britain. One ad from the Agricultural Board stressed the importance of potatoes to the war effort:

Let us, therefore, make a united and supreme effort to protect Newfoundland from becoming a weak link in the Empire's chain of war cares, as this will result if, by our indifference, we allow starvation to threaten us. With our God-given abundant fish supply and the requisite quantity of potatoes we cannot be made to suffer very acutely from hunger, and we can afford to await the time when, in the wisdom of the Divine Providence, it shall be fitting to crown the heroic struggle we are making with a victorious and lasting peace.²³³

²³¹ "The Food Shortage," *Evening Telegram*, 5 March 1917.

²³² "Newfoundland Agricultural Board," *Evening Telegram*, 11 February 1918.

²³³ "Newfoundland Agricultural Board," *Evening Telegram*, 11 February 1918.

The Agricultural Board and Governor Davidson drew on the language of both piety and patriotism to encourage Newfoundlanders to become self-sufficient.

By 1917, it was clear that the effort of the Agricultural Board was successful. In June, Mr. Devereaux announced to the House of Assembly that, as a result of the work of the Agricultural Board, Newfoundland's potato 1917 crop was 400,000 barrels larger than the crop in 1916.²³⁴ In addition to the increase in quantity of locally grown potatoes, there was an increase in price. Devereaux explained that the price of potatoes went up as people began to rely on them as a larger part of their diet, as a replacement for expensive flour. On the whole, the Agricultural Board was able to convince Newfoundlanders that they not only had a patriotic duty to plant potatoes, but that flour rationing by the FCB was effective in replacing a portion of the Dominion's flour consumption with the consumption of potatoes.

Conclusion

Prior to the First World War, Newfoundland relied on free market capitalism to provide food and the necessities of life. Conditions created by the First World War resulted in the abandonment of the liberal ideal of free markets. This resulted in a new demand for the government to become involved in the provision of the necessities of life. Before the war, two major political movements dominated Newfoundland politics. Liberal-oriented newspapers and politicians believed in laissez-faire economics and felt that the government had no right, or was unable to, interfere in free markets. On the other hand, Progressives

²³⁴ Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 27 June 1917.

argued for government intervention in free markets to alleviate social problems. During the war, both groups called on the government to intervene in the free market in vastly different ways.

On the issue of coal, liberals in the Dominion thought it was useless for the government to intervene in coal prices. They argued the conditions of the war created the high the price of coal, and the government of Newfoundland could do precious little to control them. Many liberals argued that coal merchants had to raise their prices in order to turn a profit and make the effort of importing coal worth their while. They suggested that increased profits were also necessary due to the risk of wartime shipping. In the eyes of liberals, the government was responsible for ensuring the Dominion had enough coal, regardless of the price, and advocated for Morris's administration to obtain coal for merchants to sell.

Conversely, Progressives in the Dominion focused entirely on the price of coal. They accused the coal merchants of taking advantage of the war by charging inflated prices in an effort to line their pockets. They maintained that the government was responsible for protecting the people against merchant greed. Progressives argued that merchants had a patriotic duty to provide Newfoundlanders with the necessities of life at a price they could afford. They advocated that the government could do this by setting coal prices, and if necessary, seizing all coal stocks in the Dominion to ensure that merchants sold coal for a fair price. Ultimately, the Progressives came out on top of the coal issue when the government set a maximum price for coal in 1917 and seized coal stocks when merchants exceeded this price.

On the issue of flour prices and availability, liberal advocates argued, as they did on the coal issue, that flour prices were the product of the international market and that flour prices were rising because of the conditions of the war. Instead of meddling with flour markets, liberals argued that the government should focus on rationing flour. They suggested that Newfoundland were gluttons for flour and were shirking their duty while the rest of the British Empire and the United States were cutting back on their flour consumption. Progressive, on the other hand, were outraged at the price of flour. They admitted that the war caused part of the price increase but maintained that a large portion of the rise in the cost of living was the result of merchants attempting to make as large a profit as possible. They advocated that the government had a responsibility to ensure that every citizen could afford flour and advocated that the government step in to regulate flour prices.

While the government pleased the Progressives by creating the Food Control Board, which had the power to regulate food prices and seize stocks of food, their actions aligned more with the wishes of the liberals. Instead of controlling the price of flour, the FCB sought to reduce Newfoundland's reliance on flour by forcing people to use flour substitutes, which were often much cheaper than wheat flour.

The issue of new sources of food, on the other hand, saw limited traction. Many Progressives and liberals argued that Newfoundlanders should rely on cod heads, tongues, cheeks, and seal flippers and carcasses as a wartime alternative to fresh or salted meat. Despite their calls on the government to encourage the consumption of these foods, Newfoundlanders did not readily add these foods to their diets. Conversely, the government was effective at encouraging people to increase the amount of potatoes in their diets. By

informing the people that potatoes were a patriotic and economic option, the government was able to increase the Dominion's potato production by over 400,000 barrels a year.

At the heart of the issue of food rationing and price control was a shifting focus on the rights of individuals versus the rights of the community. During the war, Progressives and liberals renegotiated the social contract between citizens and the state. They argued that in return for the service of soldiers, who were fighting and dying for their country, the government had an obligation to ensure that those on the home front were provided with the necessities of life. Like any negotiation, the liberals, Progressives, and the government had different agendas and different ideas about what should be done. Despite their disagreements, both sides agreed that the government had a duty to focus on the basic needs of the community and become more involved in both free markets and the everyday lives of citizens.

In a 2013 MA thesis titled "From Governors to Grocers: How Profiteering Changed English Canadian Perceptions of Liberalism in the Great War of 1914-1918", Ryan Targa concluded that the failure of the Canadian government to effectively combat war profiteers caused working class Canadians to challenge the very basic assumptions of liberalism.²³⁵ In Newfoundland, profiteering and the issue of the rising cost of living not only caused Newfoundlanders to question liberalism, it caused citizens of all political spectrums to abandon liberal concepts of a free market and demand various forms of government intervention in the importation, sale, and distribution of the necessities of life.

²³⁵ Ryan Targa, "From Governors to Grocers: How Profiteering Changed English Canadian Perceptions of Liberalism in the Great War of 1914-1918," MA Thesis, Queens University, 2013.

Chapter 3: Taxation

Introduction

The collection of taxes is perhaps the most fundamental characteristic of the relationship between citizens and the state. While taxation can be a contentious issue during peace time, the added expense of a total war effort can exacerbate existing tensions over what citizens owe to the state. In 1914, the Newfoundland government initially committed to providing a regiment of 500 soldiers for the British Army. This number would eventually balloon to over 12,000 soldiers and sailors by the time the war ended in 1918.²³⁶ The cost of training, paying, lodging, equipping, and caring for these soldiers required a massive expenditure on behalf of the Newfoundland government. This expenditure led to a debate over how the government should pay for the Regiment and on whose shoulders the burden should fall. Fundamental to this debate were shifting understandings class and what responsibilities the liberal individual owed to the state.

Under the leadership of Edward Morris, the government's first attempt at collecting the money required for Newfoundland's war effort comprised increased duties on the staples of everyday life such as flour, sugar, pork, tea, and kerosene. In September of 1914, Edward Morris told the House of Assembly: "It is an unfortunate thing that we should have to ask the house to increase the tariff in relation to some articles, but it is necessary that we should find the revenue to carry on the government in abnormal times such as the

²³⁶ "The Newfoundland Regiment and the Battle of Beaumont Hamel, *Veteran's Affairs Canada*. http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/first-world-war/fact_sheets/beaumont-hamel. Accessed on 9 Oct 2018.

present.”²³⁷ Following his statement, a bill was introduced in the house that would put increase existing tariffs to include a tariff of 25¢ per pound of flour, 5¢ per gallon of kerosene, 5¢ per pound of tea, 3¢ per pound of sugar, and \$1.50 per barrel of salt pork and beef. The editor of the *Mail and Advocate*, estimated that this burden would be so unpopular among the producers that Morris’s government would be forced out of office.²³⁸

In many ways, Morris’s increase in taxation follow traditionally liberal principles of the equality of the individual. In this scenario, each individual paid roughly the same amount of sales taxes, no matter how much they made. While wealthier Newfoundlanders could afford to purchase more food, it would only result in a marginally heavier tax load.

The rise in the cost of living caused by this increase in taxation caused widespread resentment. Many in rural Newfoundland felt that the government was making the poorest of the Dominion pay for the war effort by increasing the taxation on food. A letter to the editor of the *Mail and Advocate* by “Ready for Action” from Doting Cove expressed this anger. In this letter, the author wondered whether or not Morris was trying to starve rural Newfoundlanders through excess taxation. He suggested that if Morris was trying to kill fishermen, he might as well send them all to the front. He expressed his condemnation of Morris’s administration and those who supported it: “If I voted for the Morris Party in 1913 I would try to get to Germany and ask the Kaiser to accept me for a wad for his big guns for I would not count myself worthy to be a wad for a British Gun.”²³⁹

²³⁷ “Premier Announces Further Increases in General Taxation,” *Mail and Advocate*, 3 September 1914.

²³⁸ “More Taxes Put On,” *Mail and Advocate*, 3 September 1914.

²³⁹ “War Is Half the Trouble,” *Mail and Advocate*, 16 June 1915.

As the tariffs increased, so too did fishermen's discontent. As time went on, many began to believe that the fishermen were primarily responsible for paying for the war effort.²⁴⁰ Fred Ollerand, a resident of St. Anthony, made this sentiment clear in a letter he wrote to the editor of the *Mail and Advocate*. Ollerand complained that the producer was responsible for providing the men needed for the Newfoundland Regiment. Meanwhile, Ollerand explained that both the government and the business community were taking money from the fishermen through taxation and profiteering: "It seems to me there is two types of patriotism in Newfoundland to-day, one which we have seen manifested in the offering up of our young men for active service, the other a patriotism shown in the contribution of large sums of money gained through the deprivation of the poorer classes."²⁴¹ Ollerand's letter makes it clear that many low income Newfoundlanders felt that raising money to pay for the Newfoundland Regiment through increased tariffs was unfair.

This feeling of unfairness was escalated in 1916 when Morris's administration increased tariffs on all products including the supplies needed to prosecute the fishery.²⁴² Fishermen were insulted when a new tariff on gasoline increased the cost of gas from 27¢ to 48¢ a gallon.²⁴³ This meant that many poorer fishing crews could not afford the fuel needed to get to rich fishing grounds. Coaker estimated that the tariff on gasoline resulted in a loss of over 25,000 quintals of fish with a potential value of \$125,000 and only resulted in \$5,000 in tax revenue for the government. William Coaker decried this tax in the House

²⁴⁰ "Fat and Fifty," *Mail and Advocate*, 26 June 1915.

²⁴¹ "Two Kinds of Patriotism," *Mail and Advocate*, 30 June 1915.

²⁴² "The Ultimate Stupidity," *Mail and Advocate*, 9 September 1916.

²⁴³ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 27 April 1916.

of Assembly and protested the unequal tax burden that was placed on the shoulders of fishermen.²⁴⁴

While the Progressive readers and editorial staff of the *Mail and Advocate* were concerned about taxation, other newspapers were not. The *Evening Telegram* pointed out that Britain had much higher levels of taxation on a wider range of goods.²⁴⁵ Similarly, in a speech given in 1916, W.F. Lloyd admitted that Newfoundland was falling behind the other British Dominions in its financial contribution to the war effort and suggested that this money must be raised through “taxes or other means.”²⁴⁶ What “other means” would be used to raise money for the war effort would be one of the most controversial political issues during in 1916 and 1917.

Business Profits Tax

By 1916, one thing was clear: both liberals and Progressives agreed that the government had to raise more money to support the war effort, but they disagreed on how this money should be raised. Progressive elements leaned towards lower tariffs and a business profits tax, while the liberals preferred high tariffs and an income tax. Both of these methods of taxation would result in more money in the government’s coffers, the difference was who would shoulder the burden of this taxation. Proponents of the income tax argued that taxing every citizen’s income would be a fair way to ensure every individual paid an equal share. Those who argued for a business profits tax suggested that taxing the

²⁴⁴ “The Ultimate Stupidity,” *Mail and Advocate*, 9 September 1916.

²⁴⁵ “Heavier Taxation at Home,” *Evening Telegram*, 22 September 1915.

²⁴⁶ “Our Hand to the Plough,” *Evening Telegram*, 19 October 1916.

income of fishermen would unfairly place the responsibility of paying for the war on the those who could least afford it. Instead, Progressives suggested that the government should place a higher tax burden on those who could best afford it: the business community.

The first calls for a profits tax came from John St. John, the editor of the *Mail and Advocate*, in 1915, when he suggested that businesses were profiting from the war effort while the producers was burdened with heavy taxation and a rising cost of living. He criticized the 40% increase in freight rates, which were driving up the cost of living, while the wealthy drove motor cars through the streets of St. John's." Instead he suggested that the government owed a responsibility to the citizens to place the burden of taxation on the shoulders of those who are best able to support it: "Let us tax the people who scoop in the huge profits; and there will be no reason for taxing the commodities of the poor and the industrious."²⁴⁷

The rising cost of living and the widespread belief that merchants were using the war to justify earning excess profits was a prime motivation for those who wanted a tax on profits. The feeling that merchants were taking advantage of war conditions increased in 1916 after the sale of steamers to the Russian government.²⁴⁸ While the sale of these vessels meant exorbitant profits for the ships owners, it would have a profoundly negative impact for the Dominion. The sale of these ships meant that there was far less tonnage available to import the staples of life in wartime Newfoundland: coal, flour, salt, and other foodstuffs. The reduction in tonnage led an increase in freight rates, increasing the cost of living. In

²⁴⁷ "War Profits," *Mail and Advocate*, 19 Oct 1915.

²⁴⁸ Mike, O'Brien, "Producers versus Profiteers: The Politics of Class in Newfoundland During the First World War," 52

addition to a shortage in tonnage, the sale of these steamers created a shortage in berths for fishermen hoping to participate in the seal hunt.

The sale of these steamers to the Russian government was seen as a betrayal by many Newfoundlanders. They believed, on account of the war, that the Reid Company, A.J. Harvey, the Job Brothers, and Baine Johnson had a civic duty to put the needs of the community over their own profits. By selling these ships, they were breaking their civic responsibility. This led to many calls for these companies to pay large retroactive taxes on the sale of their ships:

We insist further that the Shylocks who have had their pound of flesh should be made to disgorge some of their ducats and compelled to aid the cause of the Empire by digging into their jeans and passing into the Exchequer some of their easily gotten coin... We say tax the monied interests; and do not lay greater burdens on the shoulders of the fishermen and the daily wage earner.²⁴⁹

In the eyes of the *Mail and Advocate*, the business owners who sold these ships were wholly unpatriotic and the government needed to protect fishermen by enacting a profits tax.

The *Evening Telegram* also called for the shipowners to pay a heavy tax on the sale of their vessels. Unlike the *Mail and Advocate*, the *Evening Telegram* was very concerned about Newfoundland failing to live up to the financial contributions of other Dominions. The editor pointed out that Newfoundland was lagging behind Britain and Canada in its contribution to the war effort.²⁵⁰ In order to raise more money for the war effort the editor suggested that vessel owners should turn over a substantial portion of their profits to help offset the cost of the war.²⁵¹ While the *Evening Telegram* was quick to call for a specific

²⁴⁹ "Monied Gentry," *Mail and Advocate*, 10 January 1916.

²⁵⁰ "War Taxation," *Evening Telegram*, 25 January 1916.

²⁵¹ "Are You Helping to Turn the Key?" *Evening Telegram*, 26 January 1916.

tax on the sale of steamers, it is important to note that they did not initially advocate for a general tax on profits.

The sale of these vessels began a conversation across Newfoundland about the responsibilities of producers and business-class citizens. For Progressives, the widespread belief that merchants were making record breaking profits convinced them that the government should require all businesses to pay a tax on all profits. The editor of the *Evening Advocate* cautioned the government that they were not placing the “burdens of war on the shoulders best able to bear them.” He warned that during the Napoleonic Wars, the burden of the war was put on the producers instead of on commerce and industry and the result was great suffering for working-class Britons characterized by bread riots, mutinies, and conspiracies. He asked the government if they would learn from the mistakes of previous wars and place a greater burden on those who could best afford it.²⁵²

Another argument for a profits rested in the growing concept of total war that dictated the entirety of Newfoundland society should be geared to help fight and win the war. The argument for a total war effort became more prevalent after reports that German U-Boats were coming to the coast of North America to attack British shipping. The submarine scare caused the public to fear that U-Boats would starve Newfoundland.²⁵³ Calls came out for every Newfoundlander to eliminate all food waste, to utilize every acre of land for the cultivation of vegetables, and to fill the ranks of the Newfoundland Regiment and Royal Naval Reserve. People also argued that government should intervene in the

²⁵² “The War Burdens,” *Evening Advocate*, 5 Jan 1917. In 1917, the *Mail and Advocate* changed its name to the *Evening Advocate*.

²⁵³ “The Submarine Menace,” *Evening Advocate*, 28 November 1916.

markets to ensure that every Newfoundlander has adequate food so men can be healthy enough to fight the war.²⁵⁴ Every element of society had to mobilize themselves for the war effort. In a letter to the editor of the *Evening Advocate*, W.W. Blackall, Superintendent of Education for the Church of England and future founder of Memorial University, argued that every class of society has responsibilities to the war effort. Those young and healthy enough to fit had a duty to enlist, the wealthy had to give freely and ungrudgingly to their last dollar, and businesses had to avoid the temptation to charge excessive prices. Blackall argued that every single Newfoundland could contribute to the war effort.²⁵⁵

Along with the concept of a total war effort, came the calls for selective conscription of men to fill the ranks of the Newfoundland Regiment. Liberals initially led the call for conscription that Progressives opposed. For Progressives, it was a perverse idea that the government would conscript men into the military before the government conscripted the wealth of the business community through taxation. According to the *Evening Advocate*: “The war has demanded the service and life of every young man and it is manifestly absurd that when money can be of such service in the war, that it should be exempt.”²⁵⁶ For those who advocated for the conscription of wealth, it was unimaginable that the business community would not be asked to give a portion of their profits while men were being asked to give their lives.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ “Looking Forward,” *Evening Advocate*, 19 December 1916.

²⁵⁵ W.W. Blackall, “Newfoundland’s Part in the War,” *Evening Advocate*, 9-12 February 1917.

²⁵⁶ “Conscription of Wealth,” *Evening Advocate*, 30 June 1917.

²⁵⁷ “Men or Money First?” *Evening Advocate*, 31 July 1917.

As a result of calls from the public, a business profits tax was presented to the House of Assembly on 26 July 1917.²⁵⁸ The bill proposed that a tax of 25% of the net profits is placed on all trades and businesses (including the business of transportation) of any description, carried on, or partly carried on in Newfoundland, whether continuously or not, except the business of Life Insurance. In the initial version of the bill, businesses were only taxed if they made over \$2,000 in profit and were also granted a deduction of 6% of their capital before the tax was calculated. For example: if a company was valued at \$100,000 and had a profit of \$20,000, they would subtract \$6,000 (6% of \$100,000) from their profits. This would leave them with a total taxable profit of \$14,000, of which the government would take \$3,500.²⁵⁹ For Progressives, this was a reasonable and equitable way of raising money for the war effort, as it only impacted the wealthiest people in the Dominion and was not a tax that could be simply charged back to the consumer.²⁶⁰

For liberals and those friendly to the business community, the business profits tax represented a serious threat to the Dominion. H.A. Winter, the editor of the *Evening Telegram*, accused the government of pushing this tax through the House of Assembly without considering its impact on the Dominion. He argued that this legislation was a joke: “if the genius responsible for the scheme wished to include his humour in a more popular manner, we advise him to try the stage – comedy or light opera – or the comic papers. He will find it also a more happy outlet for his talent.”²⁶¹ Winter argued that this bill would negatively affect the Dominion, saying that the record breaking profits these companies

²⁵⁸ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 26 July 1917.

²⁵⁹ “Excess Profits,” *Evening Advocate*, 27 July 1917

²⁶⁰ “Taxing Profits,” *Daily News*, 27 Jul 1917.

²⁶¹ “Legislation Gone Mad,” *Evening Telegram*, 27 July 1917.

were taking should be used to further develop the economy, without the fettering of taxation. Furthermore, he suggested that this legislation unfairly targeted the upper class, while leaving the middle class, who were seeing unprecedented prosperity, free from taxation.²⁶²

The debate over the business profits tax very quickly became divided by classes. After the *Evening Telegram* argued that the business profits tax would come entirely from business circles and cripple Newfoundland's economy, the *Evening Advocate* provided rebuttal. They argued that the same business circles that decried the profits tax showed no concern while they crippled the producers by raising the cost of the necessities of life to extract greater profits. The editor pointed out that a similar tax has been raised across the British Empire and did not result in the destruction of their economy. Instead, he suggested that their opposition to this tax was based in unpatriotic greed.²⁶³

In reply to the *Evening Advocate*, the *Evening Telegram* published an article claiming that the *Advocate* was attempting to mislead the people into accepting the profits tax. Winter suggested that the bill would not be a tax on "excess" profits but on all business profits. Furthermore, he said that the tax would not impact profiteering, as the *Advocate* claimed, but instead would cripple small businesses that were just managing to stay afloat.²⁶⁴ Similarly, in a letter to the editor, a writer under the pseudonym "Commerce" questioned whether the tax would impact the importation of food. He highlighted that the Dominion was 40,000 barrels of flour short of what they needed to get through the year.

²⁶² "Legislation Gone Mad," *Evening Telegram*, 27 July 1917.

²⁶³ "Mainly in Business Circles," *Evening Advocate*, 28 July 1917.

²⁶⁴ "Advocate Logic," *Evening Telegram*, 30 Jul 17.

He questioned whether this tax would impede merchant's ability to bring in the necessities of life.²⁶⁵

Local newspapers and politicians were not the only entities to express opposition to the profits tax. After the announcement that banking institutions would not be exempt from the tax, Minister of Finance M.P. Cashin received several letters from the managers of banks. Concerned that an additional tax on banking could have unforeseen consequences on the issuing of credit, the manager of the Bank of Nova Scotia wrote to Cashin requesting that the bill be deferred. The Bank of Montreal wrote a similar letter suggesting that banks already paid a high tax for the privilege of doing business in Newfoundland. He pointed out that the Bank of Montreal already paid \$5,000 dollars a year to the government and \$2,000 to the City of St. John's. Due to the high taxes already incurred by banks, he requested that they receive the same exemption as life insurance companies.²⁶⁶ Similarly, the Canadian Bank of Commerce and the Bank of Canada also wrote to M.P. Cashin expressing their concern. The Manager of the Bank of Canada also made it clear that Canada has a similar excess profits tax and banks were exempt from it.²⁶⁷

Shortly after the introduction of the business profits tax in the House of Assembly, the bill became one of the primary points of the renegotiation of class in wartime Newfoundland. This debate was centered on what a society should expect from its citizens of various classes during the war. On one hand, producers felt that it was the patriotic duty

²⁶⁵ "Sensible Objections to the Act," *Evening Telegram*, 30 Jul 1917.

²⁶⁶ Manager of the Bank of Montreal, letter to M.P Cashin, Finance Minister, 30 July 1917, PANL, GN 8.4.

²⁶⁷ Manager of the Canada Bank of Commerce, letter to M.P Cashin, Finance Minister, 30 July 1917, PANL, GN 8.4; and Manager of the Bank of Canada, letter to M.P Cashin, Finance Minister, 30 July 1917, PANL, GN 8.4.

of wealthier citizens to pay a larger share of the war debt to support the greater community.²⁶⁸ On the other hand, those of the upper class felt that they were being unfairly targeted by this legislation and that government interference could damage Newfoundland's economy. This debate boiled down to liberal ideas about the equality of the individual under the law. Liberals believed that the state should treat all individuals equally and a tax targeting a specific class was unconscionable. Instead, they wanted the government to spread the tax burden evenly across all citizens. On the other hand, Progressives felt that treating the business community and the producers equally was prioritizing the rights of the wealthy over the rights of the greater community.

When the House of Assembly met on 2 August 1917 to discuss the profits tax, the authors of the bill made some amendments in order to make the bill more palatable for the business community. In the House of Assembly, P.T. McGrath explained that the bill had been altered so the deduction of 6% on capital was removed. Instead of the allowance of a percent on capital, the bill would increase the minimum amount for taxation from \$2,000 to \$3,000 and the rate of taxation was lowered from 25% to 20%. The House of Assembly passed this bill on 2 August 1917 and then passed it onto the Legislative Council.²⁶⁹

While the business profits tax passed through the House of Assembly with very little discussion, things were quite different when it reached the Legislative Council. After the bill was read, it was met with a storm of criticism from other members. The first to criticize the bill was Samuel Milley, a prominent importer of dry goods. He felt that the House of Assembly did not give a passing thought to the impacts of this bill. He told the

²⁶⁸ "The Profits Tax," *Daily News*, 3 August 1917.

²⁶⁹ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 3 August 1917.

Council that if the House had seriously considered the bill, then they would have realized it was absurd and rejected the bill outright.²⁷⁰

Though he opposed the bill, Milley made it clear that his opposition did not arise out of his distaste for paying taxes. Instead, he suggested that profits taxes in Britain and Canada were focussed on excess profits from war production, which was absent in Newfoundland.²⁷¹ Instead, Milley suggested that the government put a tax of between 20-40% on every quintal of fish exported from Newfoundland, because the war had caused the price of fish to rise abnormally high.²⁷²

The next member of the Legislative Council to attack the profits tax was John Harvey of Harvey & Co, a powerful import/export company. Harvey pointed out that the amendments made to the profits tax by the House of Assembly, while appearing to be a reduction in the amount of tax paid, was in fact a drastic increase.²⁷³ He argued that under the old scheme, a business with \$1,000,000 in capital and \$100,000 profit would pay \$10,000 dollars in taxes. Under the new amendments, Harvey calculated that the same business would pay \$19,400.²⁷⁴ In addition to the increase in taxes, he argued that the

²⁷⁰ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 3 August 1917.

²⁷¹ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 3 August 1917.

²⁷² It is important to note a tax placed on the exportation of fish would be easily passed along from merchants to the fishermen by lowering the price offered to fishermen by an amount equal to the export tax. A tax on profits is not so easily passed on to fishermen, and this is the reason why the *Daily News*, supported a profits tax as opposed to other taxation schemes.

²⁷³ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 3 August 1917.

²⁷⁴ While Harvey's calculations are correct, he used an extreme example of a business with high capital and low profit margin. If we use the example given by the *Evening Advocate* ("Excess Profits," *Evening Advocate*, 27 July 1917) a business that has \$100,000 in capital, and \$20,000 in profits, under the old bill the business would pay \$3,500. Under the amended bill, the same business would be 20% taxes on all their profits after \$3,000, which would amount to \$3,400. While the amendments to the initial bill would raise the taxes paid by large companies with high capital, it would reduce the tax burden on small and medium sized firms.

profits tax would have a detrimental impact on the shipping industry. He claimed that Canadian and American vessels would avoid doing business in Newfoundland because they would not want to pay the tax.²⁷⁵ Similarly, Harvey pointed out that the Canadian government waved the profits tax for any business capitalized under \$50,000. He contended that many vessels could operate tax free in Canadian waters, encouraging them to leave Newfoundland, resulting in an even greater shortage of tonnage than the Dominion was currently facing.

A common theme in the criticism of this bill in the Legislative Council was that the bill unfairly targeted one class of Newfoundland society. John Anderson, owner of a large dry goods firm, said that he believed in the conscription of wealth, but he did not “believe in partisan and unjust taxation of those who are doing whatever they can to help win this righteous and great war.”²⁷⁶ Similarly, Edgar Bowring, partner in the large Bowring Brothers firm, posited that this bill targeted only one class, the business class. He said that Newfoundland’s business community were as patriotic as any other section of Newfoundland society and were willing to pay their fair share of taxes, but they felt that they were being discriminated against in this bill. Furthermore, Bowring argued that business owners were taking substantial risks by operating in the Dominion and they needed to be able to rely on large profits to justify the increased risk of wartime shipping.²⁷⁷

Despite the harsh criticism of the bill by some members of the Legislative Council, not all members opposed the bill. J.J. Murphy, majority shareholder of the United Towns

²⁷⁵ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 3 August 1917.

²⁷⁶ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 3 August 1917.

²⁷⁷ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 6 August 1917.

Electric Company, told the Council that he did have some reservations about the bill. He thought it was of the utmost importance that the government get the money it needed to fight the war effort. He believed that some elements of society were giving generously of their sons and money while others were not. He said that it was only “right and proper” that the law compelled those who were not contributing to do so. William Ellis, a building contractor from Ferryland, contended that patriotism and self-sacrifice should motivate every member of the Legislative Council when considering this bill. He told the House that passing this bill was the first step to ensuring that every citizen was doing their bit.²⁷⁸

After allowing for some lengthy debate, the President of the Legislative Council, P.T. McGrath, refused to allow members to speak more than once on the first reading of this bill. In order to prevent an indefinite debate on the matter, he made a motion to vote on a second reading of this bill. The resulting vote was divided: John Harvey, Michael Gibbs, Marmaduke Winter, Michael Power, William Ellis, Richard Squires, and S.D. Blandford voted for another reading and George Knowling, John Anderson, J.D. Ryan, A.F. Goodridge, Dr. G. Skelton, James Ryan, and Samuel Milley voted against. Following the divided vote, P.T. McGrath used his powers as the president to cast a vote in favour of a second reading.²⁷⁹

The results of the vote on a second reading of the business profits tax drew widespread condemnation from many sections of Newfoundland society. The *Evening Advocate* told its readers that “those who voted against the second reading virtually threw

²⁷⁸ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 6 August 1917.

²⁷⁹ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 6 August 1917.

the bill out and wrote themselves down as opposed to the bill – a most unreasonable and unpatriotic stand that is not worthy of them.”²⁸⁰ The editor accused the members who voted against the second reading of prioritizing their own profits over the good of the Dominion. Similarly, after the Legislative Council members cast their votes, P.T. McGrath told the Council that this vote was the most regrettable occurrence in the history of the Legislative Council. He declared that the rejection of this bill had done more to increase hostility between fishermen and merchants, between urban and rural, than any event in Newfoundland history.²⁸¹

From the remarks in the *Evening Advocate* and the P.T McGrath’s address to the Legislative Council, it is clear that certain sections of society viewed this vote as a selfish and unpatriotic act, which was designed to put the needs of the business community over the needs of the Dominion. Those who supported the business profits tax believed that all economic classes had to make great sacrifices and those with more money should make substantially larger contributions. To them, this vote showed that the wealthiest in the Dominion thought that it was preferable to sacrifice human lives than it was to sacrifice profit.

When the Legislative Council returned for a second reading of the bill, the debate continued stronger than ever. The first to speak after the second reading was Marmaduke Winter, a member of the Newfoundland Patriotic Association and owner of T&M Winter, a provisions dealer. He argued that this bill would result in Newfoundland businesses

²⁸⁰ “The Profits Tax,” *Evening Advocate*, 7 August 1917.

²⁸¹ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 6 August 1917.

investing money outside of the Dominion. He suggested that investors would seek opportunities outside of the Dominion so they could avoid the unfairly high taxes. John Harvey agreed with Winter and counseled that the only way to make this tax fair was to introduce an amendment which would reinstitute the 6% deduction on capital that was included in the first bill.²⁸² J.D. Ryan, an owner of a grocery store in St. John's, told the council that he believed it was discriminatory to force business owners to pay the vast majority of taxes while professionals with high salaries paid nothing.²⁸³ As a result of all this criticism, Mr. Harvey motioned for the Legislative Council to rise, which would kill the bill if successful.

In response to Mr. Harvey's motion, P.T. McGrath implored the Council to think about how the people would view the failure of this bill in the Legislative Council. McGrath told the members that the majority of Newfoundlanders would not understand their opposition to the bill and assume that Legislative Council voted against the bill simply because they did not want to pay the tax. He reminded the members of the grave situation of the war and how desperately the government needed money:

The world is at war, and this little country is doing its best to play its part. We have scoured the island from end to end and gathered up about six thousand men and sent them overseas. We are at the present moment facing an agitation that the conscription of men shall be put into effect, and there are members of this House who favour that, but yet when it is suggested that a moderate amount of the profits that they themselves have gained as a result of their operations during the past two or three years shall be conscripted for the purposes of the State, they object most vigorously.²⁸⁴

²⁸² *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 6 August 1917.

²⁸³ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 7 August 1917.

²⁸⁴ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 7 August 1917.

McGrath warned the Council members that if they expected the masses to give up their children to fight and die for the British Empire and everything it stands for, then the wealthy members of society had an obligation to give a reasonable amount to support the war effort.²⁸⁵

Before the House took a vote on Harvey's motion, Richard Squires, the Justice Minister, urged the other members of the Council to vote in favour of this bill.²⁸⁶ Squires reminded the Council that this was a financial measure, which was the sole responsibility of the House of Commons. This meant that under the Constitution the Legislative Council was not able to amend the bill. Squires also noted that because the bill was a financial matter, the Council should not summarily reject the bill. In addition to highlighting the constitutional issues of killing the bill, Squires attacked those who claimed the bill unfairly targeted certain individuals:

From one home a son goes forth to live one glorious hour before the foe, and then with his life's blood to inscribe his name upon the roll of Britain's honour. Another lad goes forth, fights as valiantly and spares himself no risk, and after years of conflict returns bearing upon his unscathed breast the honors of military achievement. Viewing these things as we do, at one moment through the mist of sorrow over the snuffing out of heroic life, and at another moment looking upon the scene with the sunshine of honor, victory and life about us, we see apparent inequality representing a mere difference in dollars suggested by the honorable members as resulting from the operation of this Act is as dead level and as insignificant as the straws upon a mud puddle on a country road.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 7 August 1917.

²⁸⁶ As a member of the People's Party, Squires won a seat in Trinity Bay in the 1909 election. He lost his seat in 1913, was appointed to the Legislative Council, and given a position in Morris' Executive Council as the Justice Minister.

²⁸⁷ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 7 August 1917.

Squires appealed to the Council to accept the sacrifices required in this bill and give up a reasonable portion of their income while others sacrificed their own flesh and blood to stop the juggernaut of war.²⁸⁸

Following Squires's speech, the House took a vote on the motion to rise. Despite the efforts of Squires and McGrath to change the mind of the Council, the motion succeeded with Harvey, Bowring, Anderson, Milley, Winter, Goodridge, J.D. Ryan, J. Ryan, and Knowling voting in favour and Squires, Gibbs, Power, Ellis, Murphy, Blandford, and McGrath voting against. By rejecting a financial bill, the Legislative Council drew the ire of the majority of the Dominion and created a constitutional crisis.

The reaction to the failure of the business profits tax was predominately negative. Miranda, a regular columnist for the *Evening Advocate*, expressed outrage that the Legislative Council would be unwilling to part with a portion of the profits they were making from the grossly inflated prices they were charging for the necessities of life. She further stated that the business community would live on in eternal shame because of their unpatriotic greed that prioritized money over human life.²⁸⁹ Similarly, the editor of the *Evening Telegram* suggested that the Legislative Council's refusal to accept the profits tax would hurt the recruiting effort. Winter explained that the Legislative Council had supported the raising of troops for the war effort and now they have a social obligation to sacrifice a portion of their profits so these soldiers can be cared for upon their return.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 7 August 1917.

²⁸⁹ "Miscellaneous by Miranda," *Evening Advocate*, 8 August 1917.

²⁹⁰ "The Great Refusal," *Evening Advocate*, 8 August 17.

Outrage over the Legislative Council's actions were not limited to the pages of the *Evening Advocate*. The day after the vote, the editor of the *Daily News* attacked the Council for their unjustifiable opposition to the bill. He reminded the readers that the House of Assembly, who were elected and represent the people, passed the bill. He argued that a Council made up of unelected members had no right to kill a financial bill, that was a war measure, and one that many other parts of the British Empire had already passed. He further criticized John Anderson's argument that the bill was an example of unfair class legislation. He pointed out that the House routinely passed class legislation that benefitted wealthy citizens.²⁹¹ Anderson's comments highlight an important aspect of Newfoundland liberalism prior to the war. Pre-war liberal thinkers continually defended free markets yet took no umbrage with government intervention on behalf of the narrowly defined liberal individual: the wealthy male capitalist. By campaigning for a profits tax, Anderson was arguing that Newfoundlanders of all economic classes should be afforded the rights of the liberal individual.

Like the *Evening Advocate*, the editor of the *Daily News* also believed that the rejection of the business profits tax would hurt recruiting, as it would discourage people from enlisting to defend those who refused to pay their fair share. Similarly, the *Twillingate Sun* viewed the criticism of the business profits tax as a complete bluff. "Observer," a regular columnist for the *Twillingate Sun*, compared opposition to the business profits tax to opposition to William Coaker's earlier Sealing Bill, which merchants claimed would destroy the sealing industry and leave Newfoundland in ruins. Despite all the doom and

²⁹¹ "Business Profits Tax Bill," *Daily News*, 8 August 17.

gloom prophesized before the Sealing Bill was passed, the sealing industry continued to thrive. Observer predicted that the merchants of St. John's were making a similar bluff in the hopes of killing a bill that would force them to give up a portion of the profits that St. John's merchants squeezed from the colony in a time of war.²⁹²

Having passed the bill unanimously, the members of the House of Commons were also outraged that the Legislative Council killed the bill. On 8 August, the House of Commons had a special meeting to discuss this issue. Morris, incensed at the actions of the Legislative Council, told the House of Assembly "The Legislative Council are living in a fool's paradise if they imagine that public opinion will tamely submit to a body such as they are, irresponsible to the people, throwing out a measure calculated to provide the means of carrying on the war."²⁹³

Following this meeting, Edward Morris sent a letter to Governor Walter Davidson, informing him that he had the unanimous support of the House of Commons to submit a request that Parliament be prorogued for one week.²⁹⁴ In addition to this, Morris requested that Davidson seek permission from Arthur Long, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to increase the size of the Legislative Council from 24 to 28. With four already vacant seats, this move would allow the government to appoint eight new members. Morris planned to fill these seats with members who supported the business profits tax in order to stack the

²⁹² "A Few Observations by Observer," *Twillingate Sun*, 18 Aug 1917.

²⁹³ "The Premier and the Profits Tax Bill," *Evening Advocate*, 9 August 1917.

²⁹⁴ E.P. Morris, Prime Minister, to W.E. Davidson, Governor, 8 August 1917, PANL, GN 8.31, Office of the Prime Minister Fonds, Edward Patrick Morris sous fonds, Legislative Council, Increase of Members.

Legislative Council with supporters before Parliament resumed and the business profits tax was reintroduced to the legislature.²⁹⁵

The reaction to Morris's prorogation of parliament was polarized. The *Evening Advocate* lauded the Prime Minister's decision as a defense against a flagrant violation of the constitutional rights of Newfoundlanders. Both Morris and the *Evening Advocate* argued that the House of Assembly alone had the responsibility to create and administer taxes, because they were elected by and responsible to the people. While Morris admitted that the Legislative Council could technically throw out a "money bill," he thought it was unconstitutional for an unelected Council to throw out a taxation bill put forward by the representatives of the people. For the *Evening Advocate*, the actions of the Legislative Council amounted to an affront on democracy and the citizen's rights.²⁹⁶

The editor and readers of the *Evening Telegram* were on the other side of this debate. In the eyes of H.A. Winter, Morris's decision to prorogue parliament was done to allow him to "carry out a trick, a gross abuse of parliamentary privilege, which would enable it to impose its arbitrary will upon the country."²⁹⁷ He further argued that Morris's attempt to appoint several new "government puppets" to the Legislative Council was nothing more an authoritarian ploy to force the will of the government on the people. He suggested that the Legislative Council had every right to reject a financial bill that was rife with inequities and targeted a specific class.²⁹⁸ In addition to the Winter's commentary, the *Evening Telegram* received many letters to the editor from concerned citizens. One letter,

²⁹⁵ E.P. Morris, Prime Minister, to W.E. Davidson, Governor, 8 August 1917, PANL, GN 8.31

²⁹⁶ "The Sovereign People's Rights Must Be Protected," *Evening Advocate*, August 1917.

²⁹⁷ "Eloquence or Rant?" *Evening Telegram*, 9 August 1917.

²⁹⁸ "The Constitutional Position," *Evening Telegram*, 10 August 1917.

written under the pseudonym “Cross Roads” argued that it was Morris who was violating the constitutional rights of the people by attempting to meddle with the Legislative Council’s decision, using public antipathy towards merchants as a way of garnering support for another term. Cross Roads also said that the Legislative Council was right in blocking the bill, because this tax would only result in a rise in prices, which would be passed onto the consumer.²⁹⁹ Another letter by “One of Yourselves” accused Morris of using Germanism and Kaiserism to push through the profits tax. Furthermore, “One of Yourselves” anticipated that no man would sell “his manhood” to Morris and accept a position on the Legislative Council as a “hireling.”³⁰⁰

Despite the prediction of “One of Yourselves,” and the outrage of certain business owners, when a special session of the House and Assembly and Legislative Council began on 16 August, there were four new members of the Legislative Council: Samuel Bell, a shipwright and marine contractor originally from Grand Bank; Francis McNamara, owner of a wholesale grocery firm; Tasker Cook, a politician and business owner who served as vice-consul for Norway and Consul for Denmark; and Arthur Mews, a career civil servant. When the special session resumed debates on the business profits tax, the tone of the debate had changed from the previous session. One of the first to speak on this bill was Mr. Ellis, who confessed that he believed the failure of the profits tax in the Legislative Council made the majority of Newfoundland believe that the Council had put their own personal business interests over the interests of the Dominion and Empire, which provoked class division. He

²⁹⁹ “Are the Fangs of Socialism to Cripple the Legitimate Business of the Colony,” *Evening Telegram*, 10 August 1917.

³⁰⁰ “The Government and the Profits Tax,” *Evening Telegram*, 13 August 1917.

advised the special session that the only way to change public perception was to have a quick and unanimous passing of the bill.³⁰¹

The next to speak on this bill was a new member, Francis McNamara. He told the session that after studying the bill at length, he did not believe that the bill was as unfair or obnoxious as its detractors claimed. In McNamara's opinion, a profits tax was a fair way to raise money for the war effort, because increased profits were directly attributable to the war. In his speech he also responded to Mr. Milley's suggested tax on all fish exports instead of imposing a profits tax. McNamara informed the house that he was opposed to this, as the merchants could manipulate the price they paid for fish in order to pass that cost along to the fishermen.³⁰² He also challenged the notion that requiring business owners to pay a tax on their profits was unfair. Comparing the sacrifices of the business community to the sacrifices of soldiers, McNamara said:

We are talking about class legislation, - unfair contributions. Look around our streets to-day and what will you see? You will find returned soldiers, some of them with one leg, others with one arm, still others helpless cripples, and I say, what contribution can the wealthiest man in Newfoundland give to equal the contribution or sacrifice given by these returned heroes of the Empire? We are singing patriotic songs; our bands are playing patriotic airs; we stand up and uncover our heads when "God Save the King" is announced, but as soon as our pockets are touched, we forget our patriotism, and by quibbling and raising objections try to evade the duty we owe the Empire in its darkest hour.³⁰³

The final member to speak on this issue was another newly appointed council member, A.W. Mews, one of the most vocal supporters of the profits tax before his appointment to the Legislative Council. Mews argued that the taxation of imports had been

³⁰¹ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council, Special Session*, 16 August 17.

³⁰² *Proceedings of the Legislative Council, Special Session*, 20 August 17.

³⁰³ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council, Special Session*, 20 August 17.

unfairly targeting the producers because under import taxes a citizen would pay roughly the same amount of tax whether they made \$500 a year or \$5,000 a year.³⁰⁴ He admitted that the bill was an example of class legislation but said that it was targeting a class that has traditionally benefitted from lower taxes.

Following Mr. Mews' speech, the Legislative Council took a vote in the special session and the Business Profits Tax Act passed unanimously without amendment. The majority of newspapers in Newfoundland celebrated the passing of the Act. The editor of the *Evening Advocate* praised the Legislative Council for passing the profits tax.³⁰⁵ The *Harbour Grace Standard* suggested that the tax was fair but regretted the acrimonious debate over the issue.³⁰⁶ The same sentiment was shared by the editor of the *Western Star*, who was pleased that the profits tax was passed but deemed it unfortunate that the two houses were fighting when the Empire required a unity of purpose.³⁰⁷ In addition to these newspapers, the *Daily News* and the *Herald* also expressed support for the passing of the business profits tax.

The discussions and debates surrounding the Business Profits Tax Act was a prime example of the impact that wartime renegotiations of class had on the liberal state. Producers and the government believed that during a time of war the business class had a responsibility to contribute a portion of their profits to support the war effort. One of the key arguments in favour of the profits tax was that the government was asking young men

³⁰⁴ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council, Special Session*, 20 August 17.

³⁰⁵ "The People Now in Control," *Evening Advocate*, 21 August 1917; and "A New Age," *Evening Advocate*, 23 August 1917. *Harbour Grace Standard*, 24 August 1917.

³⁰⁶ *Harbour Grace Standard*, 24 August 1917.

³⁰⁷ "Our Parliament," *Western Star*, 22 August 1917.

to risk serious injury or death to fight for the British Empire. In comparison any level of taxation seemed insignificant. The public supported the profits tax and some claimed that the profits tax was proof that a new day had dawned on Newfoundland where the Government would put the needs of the community ahead of the needs of the individual.³⁰⁸ This support was reflected in nearly every major newspaper, including the *Evening Advocate*, *Daily News*, *St. John's Star*, *Western Star*, *Twillingate Sun*, and the *Harbour Grace Standard*.

On the other side of this renegotiation were business owners and those who supported them, primarily the *Evening Telegram*. Clinging to traditional liberal views of equality under the law, these people argued that the Business Profits Tax Act unfairly targeted one class and the government should require all citizens, no matter how rich or poor, to contribute equally to the war effort. Opponents of the bill suggested that the bill would have a negative impact on the economy of Newfoundland by discouraging companies from investing in the Dominion. Furthermore, they argued that businesses needed to increase their profits to make up for the additional risk of wartime shipping and the threat of U-Boats.³⁰⁹

In the end, the people of Newfoundland decided that the war effort required class legislation that put the burden of supporting the war effort on those who could afford it most. Under the new social covenant between citizens and the liberal state, the vast

³⁰⁸ "A New Age," *Evening Advocate*, 23 August 1917

³⁰⁹ It should be noted that the threat of U-Boat attacks on shipping coming and going from Newfoundland to Europe and the rest of North America was quite real. In 1918, U-Boats attacked and sunk shipping off the coast of the United States, Canada, and Newfoundland. Despite this, the threat of U-Boat attacks did not justify the drastic increase in prices charged by merchants.

majority of citizens believed that all social classes should make sacrifices for the war effort. Despite the protestations of business owners who argued that the bill would be a failure and depress Newfoundland's economy, business continued as usual. Eight months after parliament passed the Business Profits Tax Act, the government had generated over \$400,000, making the tax even more successful than its most ardent supporters had hoped.³¹⁰

Income Tax

In addition to general taxation and the business profits tax, the House of Assembly discussed an income tax in April of 1918.³¹¹ Alongside the profits tax, the income tax was part of the movement to find a fair method of taxation that ensured every citizen supported the war effort in accordance with their wealth. The first discussions of an income tax followed shortly after Morris's increase in general taxation. While the editor of the *Evening Telegram* continually argued against a profits tax, Theobald called for an income tax. He maintained that the cost of living had already risen to unprecedented levels and adding additional import duties on food and clothing would mean that many Newfoundlanders would not be able to afford to feed their families.³¹² Similarly, in a letter to the editor from "Junius," the author expressed concern that as a result of prohibition, other goods would have to be taxed an additional 12% to make up the difference in revenue for the government. He argued that it would be an injustice to make rural people (who he believed were teetotallers) pay additional taxation to make up for the lack of money coming in from

³¹⁰ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 13 May 1918.

³¹¹ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 23 April 1918.

³¹² "The Thoughts of Theobald," *Evening Telegram*, 10 Apr 1915.

alcohol purchases. Instead, Junius recommended that the government should put a tax of 50% on incomes over \$2,500 and an addition 5% for each additional \$500 a person earned.³¹³

Many of those who felt that an income tax was an equitable revenue measure believed the government was negligent for not establishing an income tax shortly after war started. Expressing his frustration at the government's reluctance to institute an income tax, Theobald reminded his readers that "almost every civilized country" had some sort of income tax.³¹⁴ In another article, Theobald told his readers that by taking out war loans, instead of raising money locally, Newfoundland would be paying back the cost of the war effort long after the war is over. He proceeded to criticize the government for failing to impose an income tax while England, Scotland, Canada, and Australia had already done so.³¹⁵

Unlike the profits tax, there were not widespread calls for or against income taxation. The first discussion of an income tax occurred in April of 1918, when in reply to the speech from the throne, George Grimes, MHA for Port de Grave, told the house that he was pleased that the Business Profits Tax Act, the conscription of wealth, was passed before the conscription of men. However, Grimes said that the profits tax was an imperfect bill because there were many professionals who did not own businesses, earned over \$3,000 a year, and were not required to pay taxes. He informed the House that there was a bill in Canada which required every citizen, who earned over a certain income, to pay a

³¹³ "Advocates Tax on Incomes," *The Evening Telegram*, 1 October 1915.

³¹⁴ "The Thoughts of Theobald," *Evening Telegram*, 10 April 1915.

³¹⁵ "The Thoughts of Theobald," *Evening Telegram*, 18 November 1916.

tax. He endorsed the creation of an income tax to ensure that everyone was paying their share of taxes.³¹⁶

On the same day that Grimes indicated his support for imposing a tax on incomes, while defending his support for conscription, Prime Minister W.F. Lloyd announced that he intended to introduce an income tax bill to ensure that anyone who was making a large income and was not paying taxes under the Business Profits Tax Act paid their fair share. Calling the business profits tax conscription of money, Lloyd insisted that before government considered conscripting men, they should conscript more money by introducing an income tax act.³¹⁷

On 13 May 1918, Michael Patrick Cashin made a motion for the house to form a Committee of the Whole to Consider Certain Resolutions Respecting a War Tax on Certain Incomes. Cashin informed the house that despite predictions that the business profits tax would cost more to enforce than it would bring in, the tax succeeded in generating \$400,000 while only costing \$10,000 to enforce. Despite this success, the Finance Minister said that in enforcing the bill, he noticed that many professionals and some fishermen were earning over \$3,000 a year and not paying taxes on their incomes. He said that these people were not doing their bit to help the war effort.³¹⁸

Cashin suggested that Newfoundland follow the lead set by England and Canada and set a taxation on certain incomes. He introduced a bill titled “An Act to Authorize the Levying of a War Tax on Certain Incomes.” It proposed that unmarried men pay a 5% tax

³¹⁶ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 23 April 1918.

³¹⁷ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 23 April 1918.

³¹⁸ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 13 May 1918.

on all incomes above \$1,000 and married men pay taxes on all incomes over \$2,000. Any citizen making over \$6000 a year would have to pay an additional “super tax” that would be issued on a sliding scale from 5-50% depending on how much the person made. He estimated that this bill would result in eight times as many citizens paying taxes as they did under the Business Profits Tax Act. Following Cashin’s introduction of the bill, the Income Tax Act received only a few questions and passed a second and third reading and was then passed without amendments.³¹⁹

The ease with which the income tax bill was passed is incredible evidence of the change that a renegotiation of class had on the liberal state. When Cashin presented the business profits tax in the house of assembly, it drew widespread debate among politicians and the people and brought Newfoundland to the brink of a constitutional crisis. In comparison, the income tax bill faced next to no opposition and drew very little discussion in local newspapers. This was because the debate over business profits tax led the government and the people to accept that income taxation was necessary to support the war effort. By the time that the government introduced an income tax bill, most Newfoundlanders had already accepted that people of wealth had a duty to their country and fellow citizens to sacrifice a portion of their wealth for the greater good.

The Victory Loan

In addition to money raised locally, the government took out a series of loans to help fund their contribution to the war effort. In 1914, the government received \$2,000,000

³¹⁹ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 13 May 1918.

in loans from the British government and the Bank of Montreal. This lasted the government two years, until 1916, when they would pay back this loan. With the war still raging in 1916, the government passed “An Act to Authorize the Raising of a Sum of Money by Loan for Naval, Military, Railway, and other Public Purposes.” This act authorized Morris to raise a loan of \$5,000,000 with an interest rate not higher than 5.5%. The government used this money for several different reasons: \$1,000,000 went toward the completion of certain sections of the railway, another \$1,000,000 was used to start paying off other existing loans, and the remaining \$3,000,000 was used to support Newfoundland’s war effort.³²⁰

In the fall of 1916, Morris visited the United States and secured a loan of \$5,000,000, however, by early 1917 this loan was exhausted. Morris then turned to Britain for an additional loan of \$1,500,000 that was meant to keep the war effort going until they could find additional revenue. Knowing the loan from the British government would not last, the House of Assembly passed another bill in 1917 titled “An Act to Authorize the Raising of a Sum of Money for Naval and Military Purposes,” which allowed Morris to seek an additional \$3,000,000 with an interest rate of not more than 5.5%.³²¹ Unlike Morris’s trip to the United States in 1916, when Morris travelled to the U.S. in 1917 he was informed that due to the international financial conditions, American banks would not be loaning money to foreign governments. When the Morris surveyed market interest rates

³²⁰ *Acts of the General Assembly of Newfoundland Passed in the Eighth Year of the Reign of His Majesty, King George V.*, (St. John’s: J.W. Withers, 1917), 211-212.

³²¹ *Acts of the General Assembly*, 115.

in Canada and Europe, he found that if they acquired a loan in Europe, they would have to pay 7.00% to 7.25% interest at a minimum and the rates could go as high as 9.00%.³²²

Inspired by Victory Loan programs in the United States, M.P. Cashin suggested that instead of paying a large amount of interest to a foreign country, the citizens should be offered the opportunity to finance the country's war effort. Cashin reminded the House that there was approximately \$16,000,000 in savings accounts in the Dominion that was only earning 3% interest. He said that with an interest of 6.5% on their investment, both practicality and patriotism might persuade people to purchase Victory Loans.³²³ In many ways, both citizens and the State could benefit from the Victory Loan. Citizens would get an investment at much higher rates than offered at local banks and the government would get a loan at a lower rate than the international market offered.

Cashin told the House of Assembly that if they passed a Victory Loan bill, it would be the duty of every citizen to loan money to the government. He said:

We are in this fight to stand by the British Empire until the last ditch. That is our duty, and so we intend to do it, and I think it is the bounden duty of every man in this Colony to-day when this loan is placed before him, to come forward with his money and give it to the Government on the terms prescribed in the Act... it is just as imperative for the man with the money to lend it to his country as it is for the widow's son to go out and spill his blood on the battlefield for us.³²⁴

By making a comparison between enlisting to fight and lending money to the war effort, Cashin made a powerful statement about the obligations of citizens to purchase Victory Bonds.

³²² *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 4 May 1918.

³²³ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 4 May 1918.

³²⁴ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 4 May 1918.

After M.P. Cashin introduced “An Act to Authorize the Raising of a Sum of Money by Loan for Naval and Military Purposes” to the House of Assembly on 4 May, there was little discussion and both the House of Assembly and Legislative Council passed the bill by 13 May.³²⁵ The bill allowed the government to raise \$6,000,000 in loans at a rate of 6.5% interest. The government would not have to repay this loan until 1928, at which time they would make payments twice year to all bond holders.³²⁶

Before the government announced the Victory Bond drive, they sought loans from Canada and were able to get \$4,000,000. This set their goal for the Victory Bond drive at \$2,000,000. Now the government had to convince people to take their savings out of the banks and purchase Victory Bonds. In order to do this, they began an advertising blitz in newspapers across the island. Together, the newspaper editors and the government used two main themes to sell Victory Bonds: that it was the duty of every citizen to purchase Victory Bonds to support the troops overseas and that purchasing Victory Bonds was a way for those who could not serve to defend Newfoundland.

The first advertising strategy was straightforward. It relied on the wartime obligation of citizens and the state to provide for those who enlisted in the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve or the Newfoundland Regiment. In an *Evening Telegram* article titled “How A Newfoundland Victory Loan Can Help Win the War,” the editor told his readers that the government would use money from the Victory Loan to equip and arm soldiers and sailors from Newfoundland who were risking their lives. He said: “No matter how

³²⁵ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 13 May 1918.

³²⁶ *Acts of the General Assembly of Newfoundland Passed in the Eighth and Ninth Years of the Reign of His Majesty, King George V.*, (St. John’s: J.W. Withers, 1918), 96.

brave our soldiers may be they cannot contend against the enemy unless they are fully equipped, and arms, equipment, etc., cannot be obtained without money.” Given the dire need for money to support the war effort, the editor told his readers that it was their “duty as citizens and lovers of our country to see that Newfoundland does not fall behind in this struggle.”³²⁷

In addition to practical arguments about arming and equipping soldiers, some advertisements reminded that Newfoundlanders owed an unpayable debt to the soldiers who gave their lives. The editor of the *Evening Advocate* asked his readers if they ever gave a passing thought to how they would repay, even in the smallest amount, those soldiers and sailors who were giving their lives so Newfoundland could live in peace and security.³²⁸ He told his readers that the only way they could begin to repay that sacrifice was to purchase Victory Bonds:

There is only one way in which you can endeavour to be worthy to at least some degree of the sufferings and the sacrifices of your defenders, and that is by aiding with every means in your power the cause for which they have struggled and died, and for which their comrades are battling to-day against the forces of tyranny and oppression. And you can aid that cause in no better way than by helping along the Newfoundland Victory Loan...³²⁹

The editor of the *Evening Telegram* again expressed the same opinion, that every Newfoundlander owed a debt to soldiers and sailors, in another letter several days later when he reminded readers that “you are in debt to the valiant living and the glorious dead

³²⁷ “How A Newfoundland Victory Loan Will Help Win the War,” *Evening Telegram*, 19 June 1918.

³²⁸ “Your Debt,” *The Evening Advocate*, 21 June 1918.

³²⁹ “Your Debt,” *The Evening Advocate*, 21 June 1918.

who have fought YOUR battle, who have suffered while YOU lived in comfort, who have watched while YOU slept, who have died that YOU might live.”³³⁰

On 10 July, the editor of the *Western Star* encouraged his readers to think about soldiers in French hospitals who had been lying in agony for months on end and would return to the front once they had healed. He recommended that Newfoundlanders bow their heads in shame for how little they were doing for those who had risked their lives and suffered in the trenches. The editor claimed that the Dominion could make itself worthy of their devotion and self-sacrifice by ensuring that every citizen purchased as many Victory Bonds as they could afford.³³¹

In addition to the many editorials suggesting that citizens could begin to repay their debt to the soldiers and sailors by subscribing to the Victory Loan, the government took out ads suggesting the same thing. In July 1918, several Newspapers ran a full-page government ad titled “Supposed You Were Going Over the Top?” The ad asked the reader to imagine themselves going over the top and asked if they would stop and argue over how much glory they might earn or request that someone else go over the top instead. The ad told that reader that, of course, they would over the top without question because it was their duty. The advertisement chided the reader for not enlisting and suggested that they could save the lives of the real men who enlisted by purchasing victory bonds.³³²

Another advertisement compared a mother sacrificing her son to a citizen purchasing Victory Bonds. The advertisement read:

³³⁰ “I Will Not Be Responsible,” *Evening Telegram*, 27 June 1918.

³³¹ “They Also Serve,” *The Western Star*, 10 July 1918.

³³² “Suppose You Were Going Over the Top,” *Evening Telegram*, 4 July 1918.

She has given her all! With a proud hear and a firm smile she has made the supreme sacrifice of motherhood – her son. Her patriotism, her loyalty, cannot be measured by mere dollars – she has given her heart’s blood, of her very soul. Her boy is “over there.” He is on the firing line, risking his life that you may live in safety; watching through the night that you may sleep; suffering untold hardships that you may lie at home in ease. She would give the world to have him back. What sorrow is like unto her sorrow! What sacrifice can compare with that which she is offering upon the Altar of Freedom! And YOU are but asked to lend! If you have every dollar you have or hope to have, your sacrifice would be as nothing compared to hers. But you are merely asked to LEND...³³³

By comparing the sacrifices of mothers to the sacrifices of those whom the **government** has asked to lend, the government designed this advertisement to shame those who had been hesitant in subscribing to the Victory Loan by making their reservations about the loan seem trivial.

Another powerful advertising strategy told readers that their Victory Loan subscriptions could help defend the Dominion and the Empire from Germany. In an editorial from the *Evening Telegram* titled “Support Your Country,” the editor proclaimed that it was the duty of every citizen to buy Victory Bonds. He said that if Newfoundlanders neglected this duty then Germany would defeat the British Empire and replace democratic institutions with autocracy. He implored his readers to enlist for service or subscribe to the Victory Loan because “blood and money must be poured out in never-ending streams ere the rights of the people are made safe.”³³⁴

An ad with a similar theme appeared in several newspapers on 6 July 1918. The advertisement, titled “Your Home Is on Path of the Hun” directly suggested that Newfoundland faced a great danger from the German Army.³³⁵ It drew on a common belief

³³³ “She Has Given Her All,” *Evening Telegram*, 13 July 1918.

³³⁴ “Support Your Country!” *Evening Telegram*, 14 June 1918.

³³⁵ “Your Home Is on Path of the Hun,” *Evening Advocate*, 6 July 1918.

that if Germany were to defeat Britain on the battlefields of Europe then Germany would seek to annex British Colonies. The advertisement said that the only thing standing between Newfoundlanders and a German invasion was soldiers and sailors who volunteered to defend their country. It continued to say that the only way these soldiers and sailors could be successful was with the support of the Victory Loan. Therefore, if individuals failed to subscribe, they would be at the mercy of German soldiers.³³⁶ A similar advertisement titled “Must You Be Begged,” reminded readers of the atrocities that occurred in Belgium and tells them that if they fail to subscribe to the Victory Loan, they will face the same fate that befell the Belgians.³³⁷

Some editorials and advertisements also went as far as equating Victory Loan subscription to volunteering for the Regiment or Naval Reserve. In an editorial titled “Two Alternatives” the editor of the *Evening Advocate* articulated that every male citizen has one of two options: enlist in the Newfoundland Regiment or subscribe to the Victory Loan. He reminded his readers that the State asked soldiers to risk their lives, while the State only asks citizens to loan their money. He reiterated that there is no risk involved in the Victory Loan so every citizen must purchase as many Victory Bonds as they are able to afford.³³⁸

The *Western Star* also equated Victory Loan subscription with military service. In an article titled “They Also Serve” the editor argued that those who subscribed to the Victory Loan were every bit as important to the war effort as those who were doing the

³³⁶ “Your Home Is on Path of the Hun,” *Evening Advocate*, 6 July 1918.

³³⁷ “Must You Be Begged?” *Evening Advocate*, 18 July 1918.

³³⁸ “Two Alternatives,” *Evening Advocate*, 20 June 1918.

fighting.³³⁹ The *Western Star* told their readers that the Victory Loan was a form of national service open to every man and woman:

All men and women are liable for service to their country. They are bound to serve their native land and Empire in such capacity as they may be fitted for in the present crisis. All who have money to invest are in duty bound to now lend it to their country. This is a form of service to which all can respond. This is a call which each one can answer. This is a duty which none can escape, and which all are bound to obey. Any man or woman who can afford to invest in Newfoundland Victory Bonds, and who does not do so, is a SLACKER, to just as great an extent as the man who shirks his military service. Are you a Slacker? ³⁴⁰

The discourse surrounding and advertising for the Victory Loan campaign tapped into a very powerful sentiment that arose during the war effort. This sentiment was a profound emphasis on sacrifice and service. For men in the British Empire, society upheld military service as the very essence of masculinity. This put tremendous pressure on men to prove their masculinity by volunteering to fight in Europe. Being unable to serve was often a profound embarrassment for men, which white feather campaigns and the near constant label of “slacker” that circulated in newspapers exacerbated. By equating the Victory Loan to military service, these editorials and newspapers told men that they could reclaim their masculinity by purchasing Victory Bonds.

The intense two-month advertising campaign for the Victory Loan proved to be incredibly effective. The government initially hoped to sell \$2,000,000 worth of Victory Loans. The Victory Loan campaign started on 14 June, in less than two weeks they had already sold all \$2,000,000 worth of bonds. To ensure that all citizens were able to purchase Victory Bonds, M.P. Cashin sought, and received, an Order in Council to sell as many

³³⁹ “They Also Serve,” *Western Star*, 10 July 1918.

³⁴⁰ “Men and Women Liable for Service,” *Western Star*, 24 July 1918.

bonds as possible until 27 July.³⁴¹ When the final deadline passed, the government had sold over \$3,590,000 in Victory Bonds to 1,838 people with an approximate average of \$2,000 each.

Conclusion

The raising of enough money to support Newfoundland's war effort took gargantuan effort. Though the Newfoundland government relied on loans from the British, Canadian, and American governments, they wanted an increase in taxation to offset the debt that accrued from successive loans. In order to pass such radical taxation measures such as a profits taxation, income taxation, and a Victory Loan, citizens and the state renegotiated conceptions of class and the liberal order accepted that wealthy citizens had a duty to the community to make financial contributions to the war effort.

Prior to the war, the only method of taxation in the Dominion was the collection of tariffs paid by the consumer on imported goods. With the financial demands of the war effort, the Newfoundland government required more money from their citizens. This was the center of a great debate over what citizens of each class owed their government. According to the business class, every citizen in the Dominion should pay an equal amount to the war effort. They opposed income taxation because they believed the liberal state should not expect greater contributions from one class as opposed to another. They believed in equality of contributions from each class. The working and middle classes, however,

³⁴¹ "The Loan Oversubscribed," *Evening Advocate*, 27 June 1918

believed that their contributions should be equitable and each citizen should give in accordance with their wealth.

The liberal-minded business community put up a strong fight with the support of the Legislative Council. Ultimately, however, the language of sacrifice, patriotism, and service was more powerful than the power and privilege of the business class. As a result, anyone who opposed the profits tax was labelled as unpatriotic and selfish and their worth as citizens was questioned as they were labelled traitors, shirkers, and slackers. So powerful was the public condemnation of the Legislative Council's vote on the Profits tax, that when they returned for a second vote, not a single member voted against the bill.

In *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War*, Adrian Gregory explains that on the home front, civilian sacrifice was continually compared as lesser to the "blood price" paid by soldiers on the front lines. As a result, any sacrifice that was asked of civilians could never compare to the ultimate sacrifice that was being made by soldiers. In the case of taxation, the business community could not justify their refusal to sacrifice large portions of their income, while soldiers were sacrificing their lives. Gregory also found that with the increased demands for civilian sacrifice came a demand of an equity of sacrifice from all socio-economic classes. He argues that this was a social cement that held society together during the war.³⁴² This demand for equal sacrifice was very much present in the Dominion of Newfoundland and was the driving force behind the campaigns for taxation reform.

³⁴² Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 150.

The issue of taxation was part of a new social covenant that citizens and the liberal state negotiated during the First World War. As part of this social covenant every citizen in the Dominion had a patriotic duty to make financial contributions to the war effort. As a result, former methods of taxation, such as import taxation, were seen as insufficient because they allowed businesses to pass the cost of taxation onto the consumer. The introduction of a Business Profits Tax, an Income Tax, and a Victory Bond drive ensured that those who could best afford to support the war effort did so.

Chapter 4: Enemy Aliens

Introduction

During the First World War, Newfoundland had a rather homogenous society and the vast majority of Newfoundlanders were either of British or indigenous heritage. Despite this, there were minority groups in communities across the Dominion. The two largest minority groups in Newfoundland were Chinese and Syrian but there were also individuals from Germany, France, Russia, Italy, Norway, Sweden, and the United States.

When the war broke out, Newfoundlanders found themselves thrust into a global conflict. As a result, the Dominion drew closer to Britain's allies (France, Russia, Bulgaria, and Japan) while the war created new animosities with belligerent nations (Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire). The complex international relations of the war forced Newfoundlanders to rethink pre-war conceptions of ethnicity as they attempted to determine who was their enemy and who was not. For many people it was clear that Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire were their enemies. In August of 1914, it was not clear whether or not their German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman neighbours also posed a threat. People were also unsure about the presence of citizens from neutral nations such as the United States or Norway.

Understanding who is your enemy and who is your ally is a fundamental part of warfare. In Dave Grossman's *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill*, he explains that othering enemy soldiers is a powerful way to create cultural distance between soldiers and their opponents, making it easier for soldiers to kill. The creation of cultural difference between citizens and their enemies is traditionally done through state

propaganda, news media, and the utilization of racist and dehumanizing language.³⁴³ While Grossman's work focuses on the othering of enemies as a means of facilitating combat effectiveness, this chapter will focus on how the people of Newfoundland decided who their enemy was and how they othered those enemies to increase public support for the war effort, boost recruiting, and bring in more donations for the war effort.

Germans and Austro-Hungarians

Prior to the First World War, most people held Germany in high regard.³⁴⁴ Newspapers often portrayed Germany as a clean, efficient country filled with cultured, intelligent people.³⁴⁵ Similarly, newspapers often praised Germans for their military prowess.³⁴⁶ The positive view of Germans manifested in Newfoundlanders travelling to Germany and the Nickel Theatre in St. John's hosting many German themed evenings with a combination of educational and entertaining films about Germany.³⁴⁷ When two German vessels visited Newfoundland in 1903 and 1907, they received widespread praise from local newspapers and many travelled to see the ships.

Despite pre-war positive perceptions, public opinion began to change after Britain declared war on Germany. Immediately following the outbreak of war, editorials did not wholly demonize Germans. An article by the editor of the *Mail and Advocate* described

³⁴³ Dave Grosman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2009), 116.

³⁴⁴ Gerhard Bassler, *Vikings to U-Boats: The German Experience in Newfoundland and Labrador* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2006), 139.

³⁴⁵ "Frankfurt Real Spotless Town," *Evening Telegram*, 26 March 1914.

³⁴⁶ "German Officers are a Class Apart," *Mail and Advocate*, 24 July 1914.

³⁴⁷ Bassler, *Vikings to U-Boats: The German Experience in Newfoundland and Labrador*, 116.

Germany as a brilliant nation that needed rehabilitation. He said that Germans had made great advancements in science and industry and stated that Britain had no quarrel with the German people. Instead, the editor suggested that Britain's quarrel was with the government autocrats who were leading Germany down the wrong path. He described the war as "a war to free the people of [Germany] from the shackles of military despotism and secure for them a place in the grand brotherhood of democratic nations."³⁴⁸ In another article, the editor argued that intelligent, civilized Germans were being downtrodden by the violent barbarians who supported the Kaiser.³⁴⁹

Some readers of the *Mail and Advocate* expressed outrage over news cables from Britain demonizing German people. In a letter to the editor, an author writing under the pseudonym "A. English" expressed his shock at the outrageous anti-German slander published by the "foul writers of foul newspapers."³⁵⁰ In describing anti-German propaganda, English said:

A campaign of the vilest calumny, slander, and lying of the blackest type has been launched against the German people, and I regret to say that most people are silly enough to believe them. The Germans are painted as fiends and savages of the worst kind. We should be more Christian. If we have a quarrel with Germany it is purely a political one... I have many German friends, and better or more sincere men it will be hard to find. I cannot stand to hear Germans vilified, whilst I know these men and women.³⁵¹

English's letter shows that despite the anti-German propaganda in Newfoundland newspapers, some could resist the powerful messages telling them to hate Germans.

³⁴⁸ "Tremendous Issue," *Mail and Advocate*, 19 August 1914.

³⁴⁹ "The Two Germanys," *Mail and Advocate*, 26 August 1914.

³⁵⁰ "Calls it Slander," *Mail and Advocate*, 15 September 1914.

³⁵¹ "Calls it Slander," *Mail and Advocate*, 15 September 1914.

While the editor and readers of the *Mail and Advocate* initially resisted anti-German propaganda, it became increasingly difficult as news cables arrived in Newfoundland that contained lurid accounts of violence, sexual assault, extreme cruelty, and sadism by German soldiers during the invasion of Belgium. One cable accused German soldiers of dragging Belgian civilians behind horses, constructing bridges out of corpses, making priests strip naked before executing them, and cutting women's fingers off to get their rings.³⁵² Another described German soldiers who arrested a group Red Cross nurses and amputated their hands.³⁵³ One cable, supposedly reported by Belgian refugees in Toronto, told of a Belgian priest who complained to German authorities about random executions of Belgian civilians. In response to his complaint, German soldiers tied him to a tree and left him to die from a combination of starvation and exposure to the elements.³⁵⁴ Another cable recounted a letter written to a priest in England by a British soldier in the trenches. He told the priest of young women who ran onto the battlefield, and into British trenches, to escape German soldiers in the nearby village who had raped them and cut off their breasts.³⁵⁵

In *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial*, John Horne and Alan Kramer confirm that Germany committed widespread atrocities in Belgium and France. Between August and October 1914 alone over 6500 civilians were killed by the German Army. Horne and Kramer also show that details of these atrocities were used as highly powerful tools to win over both neutral countries (the United States and Italy) and to solidify public

³⁵² "Belgians Tied to Horses Towed Along by Germans," *Mail and Advocate*, 20 October 1914.

³⁵³ "Germans Cut off Hands of Red Cross Nurses," *Evening Telegram*, 2 October 1914.

³⁵⁴ "First-Hand Story," *Evening Telegram*, 10 October 1915.

³⁵⁵ "God and Man Will Judge," *Evening Telegram*, 16 October 1916.

support behind the war effort by dehumanizing the enemy. Furthermore, Horne and Kramer argue that by portraying Germans as unreconcilably evil, atrocity stories were not only utilized for specific purposes such as raising war loans or recruiting soldiers but to provide a moral justification for the entire war.³⁵⁶

Like other countries, Newfoundland utilized German atrocity stories in the same way that Horne and Kramer describe. Shortly after the start of the First World War, these anti-German propaganda cables altered public opinion of Germans. In August of 1914, the editor of the *Mail and Advocate* argued that Britain was not fighting the German people but the autocratic German government. By October the editor had abandoned all notions that Britain was not fighting a war against the German people. In a complete reversal of his previous articles, the editor of the *Mail and Advocate* wrote:

Time and time again one hears the expression ‘we are not warring against the German people; we are warring against the military caste that has plunged the Germans into war’... the vast majority of Germans is so decidedly enthusiastic for the war as any of the Allies and are just as firmly convinced that they are warring for a just cause... It is preposterous to contend that a class could permanently hoodwink the intelligent people of Germany to the extent that the charitable-souled allege... The fact is that there exists in Germany a tremendous hatred of Great Britain and all things British.³⁵⁷

In August the editor of the *Mail and Advocate* argued that Germany was the central nexus of culture in Europe, by October he argued that German culture was nothing more than barbarism. He acknowledged that before the war the whole world viewed Germany as an educational powerhouse and British parents were eager to send their sons and daughters

³⁵⁶ John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001, 2, 292, 418.

³⁵⁷ “A Fallacy,” *Mail and Advocate*, 19 October 1914.

to Germany for higher education.³⁵⁸ Because of the war, the editor said “Germany is no longer looked to as the home of ‘culture’; nor after the war is it likely to be anything like the same extent of former days, the Mecca of the seeker after the highest in the educational sphere.”³⁵⁹ This article highlights the power that conflict has to reshape conceptions of ethnicity. In it, the author admitted that Germany was once known for culture and higher education but acknowledged that the war shifted public perceptions of Germans.

German unrestricted submarine warfare was also responsible for turning public opinion against Germany. In particular, the sinking of RMS *Lusitania* changed how Newfoundlanders thought about Germany. Shortly after the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the *Daily News* admitted that before the attack on the *Lusitania* people did not hate Germans. According to the editor, the murder of 1,198 civilians, including 150 children, was the last straw. He condemned anti-German rioting in Britain but admitted that restraint was difficult when “women and children are being murdered by German pirates.” Instead of attacking Germans living in the Dominion, he recommended that Newfoundlanders express their anger towards Germany by flooding the recruiting stations.³⁶⁰

When Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917, the *Daily News* expressed their outrage. In an article titled “Shoot the Brute,” John Currie contended that Germany forfeited their right to be considered among the civilized nations of the world. He wrote: “[Germany] has cast on one side, as a cloak, her humanity, and stands revealed as a merciless and cruel monster. Hereafter she can only be classed with the brute and treated

³⁵⁸ “German Culture,” *Mail and Advocate*, 20 October 1914.

³⁵⁹ “German Culture,” *Mail and Advocate*, 20 October 1914.

³⁶⁰ No Title, *Daily News*, 13 May 1915.

as such.”³⁶¹ He argued that Germany’s war crimes could not be attributed to the lawless actions of some soldiers but instead to a planned campaign of the government, the military leaders, and the German people themselves. Currie believed that the actions of German sailors was so egregious that British sailors should execute any German submariners taken prison, even if they surrendered.³⁶²

The invasion of Belgium and unrestricted submarine warfare altered ethnic concepts of Germans in Newfoundland. While at the beginning of the war some people clung to pre-war German stereotypes, by 1915 the language of war recast these stereotypes. Writing in 1915, the editor of the *Mail and Advocate* said that under a thin veneer of intelligence and culture, the German race was “rotten to the core, and that “the German character was criminal in its very essence.”³⁶³

In 1917, C.T. James replaced H.A. Winter as the editor of the *Evening Telegram*. He took a much more anti-German stance than Winter. In a 1918 article titled “The Leopards Spots” James, claimed:

The German is brutal from birth. Savageness is ingrained in his nature and the destructive element is uppermost within him. The Red Indian in his midnight attacks on the homes of the white man and his massacring of innocent women and children has his counterpart in the 20th century Hun who glories in the dastardly work of killing by land and sea, defenceless humanity.³⁶⁴

He said that brutality and criminality characterized the German race and that Germans could no more change their character than the leopard could change its spots. In a scathing indictment of the German Empire James claimed that there could be no peace on earth until

³⁶¹ “Shoot the Brute,” *Daily News*, 2 February 1917.

³⁶² “Shoot the Brute,” *Daily News*, 2 February 1917.

³⁶³ “Kultur and Crime,” *Mail and Advocate*, 23 July 1915.

³⁶⁴ “The Leopards Spots,” *Evening Telegram*, 3 July 1918.

the Allies annihilated Germany, ploughed their land with salt, and forced them to stay confined within their borders, unable to trade or conduct business with the rest of the world.³⁶⁵ James also said that Britain was fighting the German people as much as it was their government because German culture only appreciated ruthlessness. He believed that German conduct during the war showed that every German citizen was devoid of any positive characteristics³⁶⁶

The racial element of these editorials show that the war reversed ethnic concepts of Germans. Before the war, German ethnicity was associated with tidiness, education, culture, innovation, and intelligence. A deliberate campaign of propaganda, focussed on German atrocities in Belgium and at sea, resulted in a radical reconfiguring of what Newfoundlanders believed were the ethnic characteristics of Germans. As a result, Germans became associated with barbarity, cruelty, militarism, authoritarianism, and paganism.

Spy Mania

As a result of anti-German propaganda, Newfoundland found itself in the depths of “spy mania” by the winter of 1914. Given Newfoundland’s close proximity to Canada and the United States, its sparse population, and isolated coastlines, many citizens and government officials in Newfoundland, Canada, and Britain believed that Germany might use the coast of Newfoundland or Labrador as a U-Boat base for attacks against allied

³⁶⁵ “The Leopards Spots,” *Evening Telegram*, 3 July 1918.

³⁶⁶ “Out of the Question,” *Evening Telegram*, 18 July 1918.

shipping.³⁶⁷ At the beginning of the war, most military officials assumed that if U-Boats were to operate off the coast of North America, then they would need a safe harbour to refuel, resupply, and re-arm. Many believed that Germany would send spies to Newfoundland so they could establish clandestine supply bases or operate resupply ships that would allow them to attack British, Canadian, and American shipping.

Due to the perceived threat of German U-Boats, many citizens became suspicious of any German or Austro-Hungarian people living in the Dominion. The *Mail and Advocate* made one of the first public accusations of espionage against a German living in Newfoundland. In July of 1914, Robert von Stein a mechanical engineer with the Newfoundland Railway, died. Immediately following his death, St. John's celebrated Von Stein as a popular figure. His obituary described him as a "prominent and popular citizen" of St. John's who enjoyed fishing, hunting, and curling. It declared that would be remembered by the people of Newfoundland for his cheery voice.³⁶⁸

Despite the high esteem with which St. John's remembered Robert von Stein, shortly after the war started a front-page article in the *Mail and Advocate* dragged his name through the mud when it accused him of being a German spy. The article accused Von Stein of infiltrating Newfoundland society and earning its confidence for the purpose of relaying information back to Germany. It claimed that documents found after Von Stein's death proved he had visited many coastal and inland locations, including the Bell Island

³⁶⁷ W.E. Davidson, Personal Diary, 19 December 1914, PANL, MG 136.5, Walter Edward Davidson Fonds.

³⁶⁸ "Obituary: R. Von Stein," *Evening Telegram*, 16 July 1914.

Mines, and sent maps and information about them to the Kaiser. Finally, the article suggested that Von Stein had two sons in the German army fighting against Britain.³⁶⁹

In response to this article, Von Stein's sister-in-law wrote a letter to the editor. She refuted the claims that he was a spy and was adamant that there was not a single piece of evidence that would connect Mr. Von Stein with Kaiser Wilhelm. She told the editor that she went through Von Stein's belongings after his death and there was not a shred of paperwork that suggested he was a spy. Furthermore, she said that the most insulting accusation was that Von Stein's sons were fighting for Germany. She informed the editor that Von Stein had six sons: two were in the United States, one in Canada, two in St. John's, and one in Botwood. His son in Botwood was the only one of military age and was in the process of enlisting to fight with the Newfoundland Regiment.³⁷⁰

The claim that Robert Von Stein was spying for Germany in St. John's was outlandish and there is no evidence that he was working as a spy. Why someone would go through the trouble of accusing the deceased Von Stein of being a spy remains unclear. What is clear, however, is that the accusation against Von Stein sent a message to all Newfoundlanders that they needed to be vigilant because any Newfoundlander of German origin was a potential spy.

The next person to face public accusations of spying was a man named Otto Rusch. Rusch immigrated to Newfoundland in 1896 and married a woman from the Dominion.³⁷¹ In October of 1914, an editorial in the *Evening Telegram* said that Rusch had come to

³⁶⁹ "Says Von Stein Was in the Pay of the Kaiser," *Mail and Advocate*, 12 September 1914.

³⁷⁰ "Says Report About Von Stein is a False One," *Mail and Advocate*, 15 September 1915.

³⁷¹ Bassler, *From Vikings to U-Boats*, 141.

Newfoundland at the invitation of Mr. Von Stein and worked as a gardener and chicken farmer. W.F. Lloyd, editor of the *Evening Telegram*, suggested that Rusch served in the German military before arriving in Newfoundland and accused him of telling people that he wished he was back in the German Army, fighting the British Empire in the trenches. Lloyd concluded this article with a demand to know why the Constabulary had not arrested Rusch.³⁷² In response to this article, A.H. Salter wrote a letter to the editor of the *Daily News*, titled "Germans In Our Midst." He was outraged that Germans were still at large. He implored the government to round up all Germans in Newfoundland and put them behind bars.³⁷³

While the Editor of the *Evening Telegram* and A.H. Salter agreed that the police should arrest all Germans in Newfoundland, the editor of the *Daily News* disagreed. While he admitted that the government should prevent Germans from leaving the island, he did not believe that they should intern them. Instead, he said that the Court should grant all Germans bail and allow them to remain at large if they presented no security risk, on the condition of good behaviour. The editor reasoned that the British Empire should treat German citizens well, because there were many British people living in Germany. He said that if the British Empire wanted Germany to treat British citizens well, then they should treat German citizens well.³⁷⁴

By 1915, tension between Germany and the United States over the transportation of ammunition and foodstuffs from the U.S. to Britain had exacerbated concerns that

³⁷² "We are Lenient," *Evening Telegram*, 20 October 1914.

³⁷³ "Alien Enemies," *Daily News*, 21 October 1914.

³⁷⁴ "Alien Enemies," *Daily News*, 21 October 1914.

German U-Boats could visit Newfoundland waters. Things became worse in July of 1915, when Governor Walter Davidson received a secret document from Cecil Spring Rice, British Ambassador to Washington, that suggested Germany planned to land soldiers and set up a U-Boat supply base on the North-West coast of Newfoundland at either Pignonier Arm, Forchette Bay, Robineau Cove or Groais Islands.³⁷⁵ As a result, the Home Defence Committee (HDC) sent a detachment of 43 armed soldiers to defend these locations and the people of Newfoundland became even more suspicious of anyone who might be a German spy.³⁷⁶

The next group of Germans accused of spying were the Moravian missionaries in Labrador. The Moravian missions had been part of the landscape of Labrador since 1771 when Jens Haven founded a station in Nain. In the 143 years since the Moravians first came to Newfoundland, they had established their image, in the minds of many Newfoundlanders, as a group of selfless Christians doing God's work converting the Inuit to Christianity.

While the *Daily News*, was initially against the detention of all German civilians living in Newfoundland, the threat of U-Boat attacks changed the editorial staff's mind. In July 1915, the editor of the *Daily News* called on the government to protect North American trade routes by placing all German nationals in internment camps. In particular, he recommended that the government investigate Moravian missionaries living in Labrador, as he believed they were using the mission to extend German influence in North America.

³⁷⁵ A. MacDermott, Acting Commander H.M.S. Briton, to W.E. Davidson, Governor, 6 December 1915, PANL, GN 8.92.

³⁷⁶ Walter Davidson, Governor, letter to Bonar Law, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 July 1915, The National Archives of the United Kingdom, ADM 116/1400/84-86.

He claimed that the missionaries were very wealthy, “trained in German methods,” and capable of inflicting great harm. He declared the Constabulary must intern them in case they harbour any hostility to Britain.³⁷⁷

Several days after this article appeared in the *Daily News*, Reverend Frank Smart, of Heart’s Content, replied to the editor. He acknowledged that the Moravian missions posed a potential threat to the region and asked if the government was watching them. Smart gave two reasons why he believed the Moravians should be under surveillance. First, he drew on wartime conceptions of German ethnicity and suggested that the Moravians were Germans first and missionaries second and they could not avoid their German deviousness. He explained: “we know what to expect of [the Germans] since they cannot act but after the manner of their kind, and the last year has revealed to us the fact that Germany as a nation, and Germans as individuals have peculiar ideas of honour.” Second, he believed that Germany was using its missionary work to spread German influence around the world. He said it was probable that missionaries in Labrador would rendezvous with German agents, posing as Norwegian whalers for the purpose of supplying U-Boats.³⁷⁸

The *Mail and Advocate*, also expressed concern over the Moravians. The editor said that at one time, people believed that Germans living abroad had wanted to escape Hohenzollernism and had honestly sworn allegiance to their new countries. He argued that this belief was a delusion and that “[Germans] have evidently been sent across the sea to promote a Germanising propaganda to weaken the principles of democracy, to wreck the foundations of human liberty, and to destroy the fundamentals of Christianity.” He proposed

³⁷⁷ “A Few Plain Words,” *Daily News*, 26 July 1915.

³⁷⁸ “Something to Think About,” *Daily News*, 20 July 1915.

that the Moravians were exerting German influence over the Inuit, teaching them the German language and turning them into spies for the German Empire.³⁷⁹

The deep suspicion of Moravian missionaries in Labrador was not limited to newspapers. In June of 1915, the Deputy Head of Agriculture and Mines, J.P. Turner, sent a letter to Captain Abraham, the intelligence officer for Newfoundland, detailing his concerns about German missionaries living on the coast of Labrador. Turner informed Abraham that he had received information that German missionaries were indoctrinating the local Inuit with pro-German propaganda and the Inuit had split themselves into pro and anti-German factions. He also expressed concern that the German missionaries could be training the Inuit to work as German agents to resupply U-Boats on the coast of Labrador.³⁸⁰

In addition to reports of Moravian missionaries, the government received many reports of suspected German and Austro-Hungarian spies living in Newfoundland. One of the prime targets of these accusations was Richard Warschauer.³⁸¹ Warschauer was born in Germany and came to Newfoundland in 1914. He worked as a representative of German Rosenstern and Company for whom he purchased and exported canned lobster. His affluent lifestyle and frequent communications with other German nationals drew the suspicion of citizens and the government who believed his work as a lobster merchant was a cover for his spy operations.³⁸²

³⁷⁹ "We Have Them Here," *Mail and Advocate*, 19 October 1915.

³⁸⁰ P. Turner, Deputy Head of Agriculture and Mines to Captain Abraham, Intelligence Officer, 28 June 1915, PANL, GN 1/10/0 War Files

³⁸¹ W.E. Davidson, Personal Diary, 19 December 1914, PANL, MG 136.5.

³⁸² Bassler, *From Vikings to U-Boats*, 146.

Another source of many complaints to the government was Franz Luttge. Luttge was of German heritage but was born in Manitoba and was therefore a British citizen. His neighbours were highly suspicious of him because he lived near a wireless station in Placentia. Many of his neighbours believed he moved to Placentia so he could spy on the station.³⁸³ Luttge found himself in additional trouble after he enlisted with the Newfoundland Regiment and told the recruiters that his surname was Smith. When his fellow troops discovered that his real surname was Luttge they complained to their chain of command that “British born subjects could fight England’s battles without the aid of a German bastard.”³⁸⁴

The government also received a great deal of complaints about an Austro-Hungarian man named Richard Korner. Korner was born in Budapest in 1891 and worked there as a farmer. From 1910-1911, he received twelve months of compulsory military training in the Austro-Hungarian Army. Fearing conscription, Korner left Budapest in 1912 for the United States. Not happy with this life in the U.S. he decided to move to Newfoundland after seeing an advertisement for the Dominion. After arriving in 1913, he purchased a parcel of land on Major’s Path and established a fox farm with his wife. Korner initially came to the attention of authorities after Richard Warschauer provided his name to the Newfoundland Constabulary while complaining that he was under investigation while other enemy aliens were not.³⁸⁵ In addition to this, Korner’s Austro-Hungarian birth

³⁸³ W.E. Davidson, Personal Diary, 19 December 1914, PANL, MG 136.5.

³⁸⁴ W.E. Davidson, Personal Diary, 2 December 1914, PANL, MG 136.5.

³⁸⁵ Statement of Richard Korner to Newfoundland Constabulary, 9 November 1940, PANL, GN 13.1.B, Box 38, File 90.

and his former military service resulted in citizens submitting “constant stories” to the government.³⁸⁶

Treatment of German Civilians

Following the British declaration of war against Germany, the Justice Department labelled German and Austro-Hungarians “enemy aliens” and the Newfoundland Constabulary subjected them to suspicion, investigation, surveillance, and arrest. One of the first measures taken against Germans living in Newfoundland was a rigorous postal censorship. In September 1914, H.B.J Woods, the Postmaster General, banned the sending and receiving of letters to and from Germany, prohibiting German Newfoundlanders from sending mail to their families. In addition to this, any mail coming to Germans in Newfoundland was subject to inspection and censorship. In particular, government officials were worried that Richard Warschauer was a spy and his correspondence with his employer, Rosenstern and Company of New York, were in fact coded messages for the German government.³⁸⁷

Starting in October of 1914, Germans and Austro-Hungarians in Newfoundland were also subjected to arrest and detention for a variety of reasons. The arrest of Germans started when the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lewis Harcourt, told Governor Davidson that it was undesirable for German seamen to remain aboard neutral vessels in

³⁸⁶ W.E. Davidson, Personal Diary, 19 December 1914, PANL, MG 136.5.

³⁸⁷ H.J.B Woods, Postmaster General to J.R. Bennett, Colonial Secretary, 23 September 1914, PANL, GN 2.14.11.

British ports.³⁸⁸ Harcourt was worried that these civilians could pass along information to the German government, who could use it to attack sensitive British ports. As a result, every time a neutral vessel entered a Newfoundland port, the Constabulary would arrest any Germans working on the vessel. The first person arrested was John Echurafonde. Echurafonde lived in Kiel and was working aboard a Norwegian vessel that was bringing a load of salt to Herring Neck. When his ship landed, a Constable arrested him and brought him to St. John's. Similarly, the Constabulary arrested F.G. Lamjack on 21 October after the ship he was working on landed on the Burin peninsula to pick up a load of fish.³⁸⁹ Four more German sailors: Otto Rusch, Tobias Feuerpach, Wilhelm Lembeck, and an unnamed man from Kelligrews were arrested on 26 October in Harbour Grace.³⁹⁰

Eager to weed out any more potential spies, Governor Davidson ordered Richard Squires to create a list of all "aliens" living in Newfoundland and from that list determine who were "enemy aliens." He instructed Squires to include anybody of foreign heritage, whether or not they were a British subject, to inquire about their education, their financial situation, and their whereabouts.³⁹¹ Davidson believed that this list would ensure that the Newfoundland government could keep track of anyone who might be a danger to the Dominion.

After Richard Squires and C.H. Hutchings, the Inspector General of the Newfoundland Constabulary, compiled the list of enemy aliens, the Constabulary arrested

³⁸⁸ Lewis Harcourt, Secretary of State for the Colonies to W.E. Davidson, Governor, 10 October 1914, PANL, GN 1/10/0.

³⁸⁹ "Prisoner of War," *Mail and Advocate*, 17 October 1914.

³⁹⁰ "German Prisoners," *Mail and Advocate*, 22 October 1914.

³⁹¹ W.E. Davidson, Governor to Richard Squires, Justice Minister, 23 October 1914, PANL, GN 1/10/0.

every German of military age in the Dominion.³⁹² By early 1915, the Constabulary had arrested 16 Germans and Austro-Hungarians including: Richard Warschauer, Wilhelm Markwardt, Richard Frohner, Klaus Heskjer, Emil Freund, Carl Rebers, Frederick Bernhart, Otto Rusch, Tobias Feuerback, Thomas Lehrer, Carl Muss, Wilhelm Lembeck, Walther Kann, Karl Jost, and Johann Drexler.³⁹³ All of these men, except three, were German civilians and were working as firemen or sailors. The Newfoundland Constabulary arrested them off their ships. Richard Warschauer, Peter Kercher, and Otto Rusch, on the other hand, were naturalized British subjects and were arrested by the Constabulary after public accusations that they were spies.

After the Constabulary arrested these men, interning them became quite an issue. Initially, Her Majesty's Penitentiary (HMP) in St. John's housed the majority of these men, however, from the beginning this was a source of controversy. When Governor Davidson visited these prisoners in St. John's he was left with the impression that they were harmless young men who were pleased that they did not have to return to Germany and fight in the war. Davidson wrote in his diary that he regretted having to lock them up in a prison indefinitely.³⁹⁴ Many of them complained that they were not given enough space or time to exercise as they were not allowed outside prison walls and the majority of their exercise came from walking the length of the halls at HMP.³⁹⁵ The prisoner's biggest complaint was

³⁹² W.E. Davidson, Personal Diary, 19 December 1914, PANL, MG 136.5.

³⁹³ War Docket, 1 May – 30 June 1915, PANL, GN 1/10/0.

³⁹⁴ W.E. Davidson, Personal Diary, 23 December 1914, PANL, MG 136.5.

³⁹⁵ Alex Parsons, Superintendent HMP to R.A. Squires, Justice Minister, 9 June 1915, PANL, GN 1/10/0.

that they were denied basic rights under Newfoundland law: they had committed no crime, were given no trial, and were housed with convicted criminals.³⁹⁶

In addition to grievances about their housing, the prisoners complained about the quality and quantity of food, clothing, and medical treatment that was provided to them in St. John's.³⁹⁷ After Davidson ordered Richard Squires to investigate the meals served to these POWs, Davidson was informed that prisoners were fed two meals a day: breakfast always consisted of tea, porridge, molasses and biscuits. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday their second meal consisted of fish, potatoes, and biscuits; Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday their meal comprised rice soup with meat and biscuits; and Sundays they had pea soup. This was the same diet provided for criminals serving long sentences.³⁹⁸ Following his investigation of the living conditions for POWs at HMP, Davidson found that their rations were "unpalatable and insufficient".³⁹⁹ He agreed with the prisoners' complaints and ordered that they be moved to other prisons across the island.⁴⁰⁰

The Constabulary relocated the POWs following Davidson's order. Wilhelm Markwardt, Richard Frohner, Klaus Heskjer, Emil Freund, Carl Rebers, and Frederick Bernhart were moved to Harbour Grace; Otto Rusch, Richard Warschauer, Tobias Feuerback, Thomas Lehrer, Karl Muss, and Richard Korner were sent to Curling; and Wilhelm Lembeck, Walther Kann, Karl Jost, and Johann Drexler were interned in Placentia. Most of the prisoners who were moved from St. John's to rural Newfoundland

³⁹⁶ W.E. Davidson, Personal Diary, 14 January 1915, PANL, MG 136.5.

³⁹⁷ W.E. Davidson, Governor, to J.R. Bennett, Colonial Secretary, 28 May 1915, PANL, GN 1/10/0.

³⁹⁸ Alex Parsons to R.A. Squires, Justice Minister, 9 June 1915, PANL, GN 1/10/0.

³⁹⁹ W.E. Davidson to J.R. Bennett, 31 May 1915, PANL, GN 2.14.241.

⁴⁰⁰ W.E. Davidson, Personal Diary, 18 January 1915, PANL, MG 136.5.

found their new conditions to be far superior.⁴⁰¹ In these rural communities they had more room, were seldom housed with criminals, allowed to take walks around the community without a guard supervising them, and were allowed to keep hobbies such as gardening and wood working.⁴⁰²

In addition to better living conditions, the quality and quantity of food also increased in rural prisons. In Harbour Grace, POWs' diets comprised bread, butter, fish, potatoes, beans, corned and fresh beef, pickles, biscuits, and the occasional pudding.⁴⁰³ Prisoners in Curling were fed homemade bread, butter, eggs, pork, salt beef and fresh beef, potatoes, herring, fresh and salted fish, cabbage, beans, rice, pea soup, and tea.⁴⁰⁴ Despite the improvement in food quality, some prisoners still found the food to be insufficient and of poor quality. In 1916, Tobias Feuerbach made a claim against the Newfoundland government seeking compensation for money he said he was forced to spend on food. He claimed that the meals provided to him were not sufficient.⁴⁰⁵ In a subsequent investigation, J.M. Bartlett, District Inspector for Curling, informed Squires that the only food Feuerbach purchased were "cigarettes, tobacco, fancy biscuits, fruit, and confectionary."⁴⁰⁶ Furthermore, he stated that after prisoners were moved from HMP, there was only one

⁴⁰¹ R.J. Korner, Prisoner of War, to R.A. Squires, Justice Minister, 20 April 1916, Memorial University Special Archives and Collections (MUNSAC), COLL 250 Sir Richard Squires Collection, 2.13.004.

⁴⁰² R.A. Squires to James Benedict, American Consul, 22 June 1916, PANL, GN 13.1.B Box 162 File 29.

⁴⁰³ Sheriff's Office, Harbour Grace to R.A. Squires, 11 June 1915, PANL, GN 1/10/10, War Docket May-June 1915.

⁴⁰⁴ J.M. Bartlett, District Inspector for Curling to C.H. Hutchings, Deputy Minister of Justice, PANL, GN 13.1.B, Box 162, File 29.

⁴⁰⁵ James Benedict, American Consul to R.A. Squires, Justice Minister, 24 June 1916, PANL, GN 13.1.B, Box 163, File 29.

⁴⁰⁶ J.M. Bartlett, District Inspector for Curling to R.A. Squires, Justice Minister, 15 June 1916, PANL, GN 13.1.B, Box 163, File 29.

complaint about food: that it was too sweet. Another prisoner, a British subject named Peter Kercher, made recommendations that would make the food more palatable for the prisoners and was allowed to assist the prison cooks in preparing their meals.⁴⁰⁷

Despite the improvement in living conditions through the move to rural prisons, the Justice Department found it unfair to house these POWs in regular prisons. They also believed it was dangerous to disperse “enemy aliens” across the island and felt that Newfoundland was not prepared to house POWs for the duration of the war. The first step in finding permanent housing was to move all the prisoners to a central POW camp. To do this, the Newfoundland Constabulary built a makeshift prison camp at the end of Topsail Road on the site of what is now Donovan’s Industrial Park. At Donovan’s, eight guards armed with rifles and bayonets monitored them and a staff of four people were hired to look after their needs.⁴⁰⁸

The government only intended for Donovan’s to be a temporary measure. In July and August of 1915, the Home Defence Committee (HDC) began to look for a better solution for Newfoundland’s POWs. Initially, the HDC thought they could send the POWs to be interned in Britain. This plan fell through because the HDC could not find a ship to transport the prisoners across the Atlantic.⁴⁰⁹ Instead, they set their eyes on Canada. On 29 July 1915, Governor Davidson wrote to the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, the Governor General of Canada, and inquired if the Canadian government could intern the

⁴⁰⁷ R.A. Squires, Justice Minister to James Benedict, American Consul, 24 June 1916, PANL, GN 13.1.B, Box 163, File 29.

⁴⁰⁸ “Twenty-Four Germans.” *Mail and Advocate*, 24 July 1915

⁴⁰⁹ J.R. Bennett, Colonial Secretary to W.E. Davidson, Governor, 13 August 1915, GN 1/10/0.

Dominion's POWs at a camp in Amherst, Nova Scotia, at the expense of the Newfoundland government.⁴¹⁰

In late October of 1915, the Newfoundland government struck a deal with the Canadian government. Newfoundland would send their POWs on the *Corsican* to North Sydney. From there, the Canadian government would transport them by rail to camps in Beauport, Québec, and Amherst, Nova Scotia where they would be interned. Ten days after this agreement was struck, the Newfoundland government sent 25 Germans and Austro-Hungarians on board the *Corsican*, under guard of the Newfoundland Regiment. The Justice Department attempted to make arrangements for the wives of POWs, who were residing in Newfoundland, to travel to Québec with their husbands. Despite their efforts, Canadian officials advised that they were not able to take female prisoners.⁴¹¹ When the *Corsican* sailed on 30 October, they had 25 prisoners. The Constabulary forced the wives of Richard Warschauer, John Pleninger, and Richard Korner to remain in Newfoundland for the duration of the war.

The government did not send Otto Rusch and Peter Kercher to a Canadian POW camp. Peter Kercher was born in Germany but became an American citizen in 1907, before he moved to Newfoundland. Shortly before the war started, Kercher received his naturalization papers and became a British subject. In 1914, Kercher was working as the Chief Engineer on the *Florizel* and was married to a woman in St. John's. When the public learned that there was a German working on the *Florizel*, they demanded that Bowring

⁴¹⁰ W.E. Davidson, Governor, to the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, Governor General of Canada, 29 July 1915, PANL, GN 2.14.241.

⁴¹¹ W.E. Davidson, Governor to Joseph Outerbridge, Chairman of the Reserve Force Committee, 19 Oct 1915, PANL, GN 2.14.255.

Brothers fire him immediately. The Bowring Brothers, caved to public pressure and dismissed Kercher solely on the basis that he was German. Writing in his diary, Governor Davidson noted that Kercher had “no hostile intent” but “had to lose his job all the same, through the force of public opinion.”⁴¹²

When the rest of the POWs at Donovan’s left for Canada, authorities decided that Kercher was no threat to the British Empire. The authorities at the camp described him as being of “most exemplary character” and pointed out that he had been a great help in preparing food and in the maintenance of discipline and order in the camp. The Justice Department agreed to release Kercher if he left Newfoundland for New York, paid a \$4,000 bond, agreed not to return, and checked in every two weeks with the British Consular Agent in New York.⁴¹³ They also seized Kercher’s naturalization papers and refused to return them until the war was over.⁴¹⁴ In addition to this, after Kercher was exiled to New York, J.R. Bennett (a People’s party M.H.A. For St. John’s West, and the Minister of Militia) decided to seize Kercher’s Escasoni estate in St. John’s for use as a sanatorium for soldiers.⁴¹⁵ There were discussions within the Department of Militia about paying Kercher for the use of his property. Bennett advised against this because he was worried it could be considered “trading with the enemy.”⁴¹⁶ Nonetheless, Bennett seized Kercher’s property

⁴¹² W.E. Davidson, Personal Diary, 2 December 1914, PANL, MG 136.5.

⁴¹³ Bassler, *From Vikings to U-Boats*, 147.

⁴¹⁴ W.W. Halfyard, Colonial Secretary to F.M. Stirling, Private Secretary, Government House, 20 February 1919, PANL, GN 1/3/A, Despatch 24.

⁴¹⁵ In 1917, the National Government disbanded the NPA and created a Department of Military to administer Newfoundland’s war effort. J.R. Bennett was appointed to the Executive Council as the Minister of Militia.

⁴¹⁶ J.R. Bennett, Minister of Militia to W.W. Halfyard, Colonial Secretary, 21 Oct 1918, PANL, GN 2.14.141.

for the sanatorium. In 1921, the Newfoundland government purchased the estate and paid Kercher's wife \$280 for the use of Escasoni by the Department of Militia.

Another German national who escaped the POW camps in Canada was Ernst Koch. Koch was born in Hamburg, immigrated to Newfoundland in 1893, and set up a tailor shop in St. John's. When the war broke out, the HDC determine that he was not a risk to the Dominion and he was allowed to remain at large, under strict surveillance.⁴¹⁷ Despite his "freedom" Koch found that being German in wartime Newfoundland was very difficult and he faced constant harassment and threats of violence. By September of 1915, social ostracism, the loss of his friends, and the failure of his business had caused Koch to become depressed and he began drinking heavily. He believed that the only solution his problem was to turn himself into the Constabulary for voluntary internment. He wrote a letter to Inspector Sullivan which read:

I have, with great patience, withstood many insults and often had to transverse long byeways and lanes to escape the jeers of the ignorant of our community, and had also to travel on the street cars, than under normal circumstances, my pocket money would allow me to do...

I also had to abandon the friendship of some of my earlier companions, who have tried to define my thoughts about the present conflict and have often misconstrued my honest expressions about the same and have twisted many of my sentences. Such friends? I have long discarded...

At times when alone I feel that the strain on my mind cannot stand much longer, in fact, I have not been jolly for a long time either at home or abroad. Moreover, I have been taking more liquor than was my usual custom and at such times would have retaliated to my tormentors if they had been present....

⁴¹⁷ Bassler, *From Vikings to U-Boats: The German Experience in Newfoundland and Labrador*, 147.

I shall not commit to paper all that transpired, but however, shall give you full explanation when sometime in the near future I shall request an audience from you and in all probability shall make arrangements for my internment...⁴¹⁸

While life for Germans and Austro-Hungarians who remained in Newfoundland was difficult, many POWs found their experience to be much worse in the Canadian POW camps. The American Consul (who was looking after their welfare on behalf of the German government) received many complaints that the prisoners received much worse treatment than they had in St. John's. After hearing about the conditions of her husband's internment in Canada, Richard Warschauer's wife, who was born in Newfoundland, described these camps as a "British atrocity in Amherst."⁴¹⁹

After a short time in a Canadian POW camp, Richard Korner requested that the Canadian government release him and allow him settle on a small farm in Québec. The Canadians could not process his request because Squires did not provide any information to them explaining why the Constabulary arrested Korner in the first place. Without this information, Canada was unable to determine if Korner was a legitimate threat to Canada and felt they had no other choice but to intern Korner indefinitely.⁴²⁰ When Major General W.D. Otter, the officer responsible for internment operations, pressed Squires for information about Korner's arrest, Squires replied that Korner was not arrested for any particular reason, other than the fact that Newfoundland did not want an Austro-Hungarians

⁴¹⁸ Ernst Koch to J. Sullivan, Inspector General, 2 September 1915, PANL, GN 13/1/B, Box 290, File 17.

⁴¹⁹ R.A. Squires, Justice Minister to W.D. Otter, OIC Internment Operations, 16 December 1915, MUNSAC, COLL 250, 2.12.012.

⁴²⁰ American Consul, Québec to P.C. O'Driscoll, Justice of the Peace, 2 December 1915, MUNSAC, COLL 250, 2.12.012.

in the Dominion.⁴²¹ Unsatisfied with Squires's response, W.D. Otter refused Korner's request for release and he remained in an internment camp.

After the Canadian government denied Korner's request for release, he wrote several letters to Squires requesting that the Justice Department allow his wife to leave Newfoundland so she could travel to Nova Scotia to be with him. In one letter, Korner told Squires that the HDC said they would make arrangements for the internment of married POWs with their wives. Korner informed Squires that the Canadian government would allow his wife to live near the camp but would not provide support for her. He requested that the Newfoundland government pay for her transportation to Nova Scotia and her living expenses as they were doing in St. John's. He told Squires "I am sure it is not your intention to keep me interned apart from my wife over a thousand miles away in a different country."⁴²² Squires agreed to pay for Mrs. Korner's transportation but informed Korner that the remuneration for her cost of living would cease as soon as she left the island.⁴²³

After Squires denied Korner's request for support for his wife in Canada, Korner, growing desperately homesick, requested to return to Newfoundland. Squires informed him that if he returned to Newfoundland during the war, then the Constabulary would arrest him and intern him in HMP with regular criminals. Korner was indignant that Squires would refuse to allow him to return home and that Newfoundland government would treat him as a criminal if he did so. He told Squires:

Why treat me like a criminal, not to be allowed to see my wife often as only once a month... I expect I could be treated as much as that German [Otto Rusch] who is

⁴²¹ R.A. Squires, Justice Minister to W.D. Otter, OIC Internment Operations, 18 December 1915, MUNSAC, COLL 250, 2.12.012.

⁴²² R.J. Korner to R.A. Squires, Justice Minister 27 January 1916, MUNSAC, COLL 250, 2.13.002.

⁴²³ R.A. Squires, Justice Minister to R.J. Korner, 11 March 1916, MUNSAC, COLL 250, 2.13.003.

still at large and even after 20 years residence didn't find it worthwhile to apply for his citizenship papers or the other German [Peter Kercher] who was allowed to go to New York. My main question which I beg to get an answer to is: why does your Hon. Government favour Germans and I as a Hungarian was not given a chance to prove that I am not an enemy of your country. Sir even a murderer is given a trial and the right to defend himself.⁴²⁴

In a letter to a friend, Korner explained how he missed Newfoundland: "I can't help it, but I am getting homesick. I guess it is no wonder if you are used to good and nice Nfld having there everything what is dear to me. I certainly get treated very well, but never mind how fair the treatment is there is nothing like the place like home."⁴²⁵ Despite his petition for Squires to allow him to return home, Korner's request to return to Newfoundland were denied. The Canadian government released him in 1916 and he wrote for his wife to settle all business in Newfoundland and travel to meet him immediately.⁴²⁶

In addition to the POWs deported to camps in Canada, the Newfoundland government had to decide what to do with the Moravian missionaries. Believing that the Moravian missionaries posed a dangerous threat to the Dominion, the British Empire, and its allies, the HDC searched for a plan to address this threat. Initially, the Committee had decided to close all Moravian missions in Labrador and deport all missionaries to POW camps in Britain.⁴²⁷ Despite the HDC's desire to deport all Moravian missionaries, Governor Davidson was wary of closing down a mission that he believed benefitted the people of Labrador for nearly 150 years. Instead, Davidson suggested that all missionaries

⁴²⁴ R.J. Korner to R.A. Squires, Justice Minister, 20 April 1916, MUNSAC, COLL 250, 2.13.004.

⁴²⁵ R.J. Korner to P.C. O'Driscoll, 20 April 1916, MUNSAC, COLL 250, 2.13.004.

⁴²⁶ Statement of Richard Korner to Newfoundland Constabulary, 9 November 1940, PANL, GN 13.1.B, Department of Justice Files, Box 38, File 90.

⁴²⁷ W.E. Davidson, Governor to J.R. Bennett, Colonial Secretary, 11 August 1915, PANL, GN 1/10/0.

travel to St. John's where he would interview them and make them swear an oath of loyalty to the King. If the Governor found them to be harmless and they agreed to swear an oath, then he would permit them to return to Labrador with several police officers to supervise their work.⁴²⁸ The Home Defence Committee believed that it was unnecessary for the missionaries to travel to St. John's. Instead, they recommended that a Justice of the Peace travel to the Missions, take their oaths, arrest anyone who refused to sign, and remain there to supervise the missionaries until the shipping season closed.

At the beginning of the war, Newfoundlanders viewed Germany as a country full of intelligent, cultured, and hardworking citizens. Shortly after the war this changed as newspapers and politicians argued that Germans were heathen barbarians who were destroying Christianity and had no place in the world. The Newfoundland public treated anyone of German heritage with extreme suspicion and hostility, and those who were once valued members of the community were labelled "enemy aliens." The Home Defence Committee and the Department of Justice denied these men the rights of criminals, POWs, and the basic rights of British subjects. The denial of basic rights to these men, some of whom were British subjects, shows just how important shifting ethnic perceptions were to the liberal state and the concept of the individual. Prior to the war, Germans and Austro-Hungarians were well respected and as individuals were treated with equality under the law. Shifting ethnic perceptions, however, resulted in the liberal state placing Germans and Austro-Hungarians outside the definition of liberal individuals, resulting in their arrest and deportation.

⁴²⁸ W.E. Davidson, Governor to J.R. Bennett, Colonial Secretary, 11 August 1915, PANL, GN 1/10/0.

Allies and Neutrals – Germans All

After Newfoundland dealt with the Germans and Austro-Hungarians living in Newfoundland, they turned their attention to others they believed might be spying for Germany. Throughout the war, there were dozens of newspaper articles claiming that thousands of Belgian, Swiss, Norwegian, and English speaking spies had infiltrated every section of the British Empire.⁴²⁹ Like other parts of the British Empire, Newfoundland was thrust into what Walter Davidson described as “spy mania.”⁴³⁰ During “spy mania” Newfoundlanders became suspicious of anyone who was not born in Britain and the Home Defence Committee received endless letters about potential spies who came from neutral and allied nations. While Germans and Austro-Hungarians came from belligerent nations, residents of Newfoundland who came from Allied or Neutral nations were persecuted because many people believed their different language or culture made them “suspicious.” In many regards, this was a not-so-subtle way of telling those who were not born in Newfoundland that they did not belong in the Dominion.

Many of these reports stemmed from someone speaking a language other than English, which was often confused for German. During the war, a well-known Italian businessman named Antonio Nardini ran a sawmill and a dry goods store in Stephenville Crossing. His son had enlisted with the Newfoundland Regiment. In September of 1914, an overzealous Constable mistook Nardini’s native Italian for German and arrested him for

⁴²⁹ “German Espionage,” *Mail and Advocate*, 31 October 1914.

⁴³⁰ W.E. Davidson, Personal Diary, 19 December 1914, PANL, MG 136.5, Walter Edward Davidson Fonds.

being a spy. It was only the insistence of a local Customs officer, who knew Nardini well, that convinced the Constable to release Mr. Nardini. The editor of the *Mail and Advocate* described the event as “amusing” and noted that Nardini “neither looks nor speaks like a German.”⁴³¹

In 1915, two detectives with the Constabulary began monitoring a soldier in the Newfoundland Regiment they believed was a German spy. Despite training with the Regiment, the detectives were convinced the soldier was working for the German military. On the evening of 23 February 1915, Detectives Byrne and Tobin arrested Dominic Foley as an enemy spy. Under interrogation, Foley denied being German and explained to the detectives that he was born in Moscow. Not convinced by his story, the detectives held Foley for several more days.⁴³² It is not clear what happened with their investigation, but the detectives eventually released Foley who resumed serving with the Newfoundland Regiment and was killed in action during the Battle of Langemarck in 1917.

The Newfoundland Constabulary did not limit its investigations to residents who spoke foreign languages. In 1915, James Hansen, a Scottish man, arrived from the New York to purchase furs in Labrador. Shortly after arriving, he bought a motorboat and provisions at Battle Harbour and set out for Nain. Despite his honest intentions and British citizenship, someone made an anonymous report to the Constabulary that Hansen was a German spy.⁴³³ The Newfoundland Constabulary sent the steamer *Jennie Foote* to intercept Hansen on his way to Nain and force him to return to Battle Harbour. Upon his return, J.T.

⁴³¹ “Nardini Held Up as German Spy.” *Mail and Advocate*, 13 September 1914.

⁴³² “Volunteer Held as Alien Suspect,” *Evening Telegram*, 24 February 1915.

⁴³³ “Monopolies on Labrador,” *Mail and Advocate*, 31 August 1915.

Croucher, Justice of the Peace, held Hansen until a Constable arrived the next day, arrested him for being a German spy and took him back to St. John's.⁴³⁴ After a lengthy interrogation, Hansen admitted that he had family living in Germany and was deported from Newfoundland.

Angered at the treatment he received in Newfoundland, James Hansen wrote a lengthy letter to the editor of the *Mail and Advocate* after he returned to New York. He explained the details of his trip and said that he was under the impression that British subjects were free to travel throughout the British Empire without carrying a passport. Furthermore, he pointed out that the family member of his living in Germany was his brother, who was interned in a German POW camp. In concluding his letter, Hansen expressed his outrage that the Newfoundland Constabulary would accuse a British subject of espionage and deport him without a scrap of evidence.⁴³⁵

Another infamous instance of the harassment of a non-native resident of Newfoundland was the case of Rockwell Kent. Kent was a famous American painter who moved to Brigus in February of 1914. In the relatively short time after Kent arrived in Newfoundland, he found himself at odds with a pharmacist from Brigus. After the two men got into a heated argument over the local Tennis Club, Kent threatened to kill and eat the pharmacist. The local magistrate held a trial and found Kent guilty of assault and issued him a fine.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁴ "Arrested at Labrador Suspected of Being Spy," *Mail and Advocate*, 20 August 1915.

⁴³⁵ "Some are Natural Born Fools, Other Grow Up with Only Half the Sense They Were Born With," *Mail and Advocate*, 20 September 1915.

⁴³⁶ Edward Roberts, "Rockwell Kent – 'The Brigus Spy,'" *The Compass*, 29 September 2017 <https://www.cbncompass.ca/opinion/columnists/rockwell-kent-the-brigus-spy-28384>.

In addition to his conviction for assault, Kent came under suspicion from other residents of Brigus who doubted the motives of an American painter, with a knowledge of German language and culture, who sang German songs, for taking up residence in Brigus.⁴³⁷ They were convinced he was a spy and reported their suspicions to the Newfoundland constabulary. As a result of these accusations, the Constabulary launched an investigation of Kent and interviewed him on several occasions. During one of these interviews, Kent admitted to Sergeant Byrne that he was sympathetic towards the German cause. Byrne told Kent that the local authorities in Brigus would closely monitor him and if he continued to express sympathies with Britain's enemies, then he would be arrested.⁴³⁸

Outraged at what he considered to be a violation of his right to free speech, Kent complained to the American Consul in Newfoundland, J.S. Benedict. He requested protection from unlawful arrest and unnecessary investigation.⁴³⁹ Benedict subsequently wrote to Prime Minister Morris, who guaranteed that the Newfoundland Constabulary would no longer harass Kent.⁴⁴⁰ Despite these assurances, Kent was the subject of a second investigation, this time by Inspector Sullivan, after the Constabulary received more reports that Kent was expressing sympathy for Germany.⁴⁴¹ Kent again complained to Benedict that Morris had not kept his word. This time Benedict informed Kent that he should follow

⁴³⁷ Rockwell Kent, *After Long Years: Being a Story of Which the Author, for a Change, Is Not the Hero* (New York: Asgaard Press, 1968), 8.

⁴³⁸ Rockwell Kent to J.S. Benedict, American Consul, 4 September 1914, PANL, GN 1/3/A, Despatch 192.

⁴³⁹ Rockwell Kent to J.S. Benedict, American Consul, 4 September 1914, PANL, GN 1/3/A, Despatch 192.

⁴⁴⁰ J.S. Benedict, to E.P. Morris, 5 September 1914, GN 1/3/A, Despatch 192; and E.P. Morris, Prime Minister to J.S. Benedict, American Consul, 5 September 1914, GN 1/3/A, Despatch 192.

⁴⁴¹ Rockwell Kent to J.S. Benedict, 13 September 1914, PANL, GN 1/3/A, Despatch 192.

President Wilson's advice and abstain from making comments about the war. Furthermore, Benedict informed Kent that, in his opinion, it was understandable that a foreigner praising their enemies would enrage the residents of any country.⁴⁴²

Following an encounter with a local magistrate in Brigus, the Newfoundland Constabulary started a third investigation of Kent. In November of 1914, Kent was preparing to send one of his paintings back to the United States. Kent required a form with an officially witnessed signature to send his painting to the U.S. When he approached the Magistrate to request his signature, the Magistrate was suspicious of Kent's parcel and demanded that Kent unwrap the painting and show it to him. When Kent refused, the Magistrate declared that Kent was "almost beyond doubt in the service of Germany." Following this third round of questioning by the police, Kent again complained to Benedict that the Magistrate's unwarranted suspicion and the subsequent ham-fisted investigation had infringed on his privacy and had further convinced everyone in Brigus that he was a German spy.⁴⁴³

Frustrated at the constant accusation of spying, Kent endeavoured to make himself as offensive as possible to the people of Brigus. He hung a sign over the door of his workshop that read "CHART ROOM, WIRELESS STATION, BOMB SHOP" and had a painting of the German eagle.⁴⁴⁴ In another incident, Kent was travelling through Harbour Grace in a horse-drawn wagon when he passed a group of POWs. Kent stood up in the

⁴⁴² J.S. Benedict to Rockwell Kent, 17 September 1914, PANL, GN 1/3/A,

⁴⁴³ Rockwell Kent to J.S. Benedict, American Consul, 30 November 1914, PANL, GN 1/3/A, Despatch 192.

⁴⁴⁴ Kent, *After Long Years: Being a Story of Which the Author, for a Change, Is Not the Hero*, 9.

wagon and shouted in German: “the Kaiser is winning, you will be out soon” to which the prisoners supposedly cheered.⁴⁴⁵

Kent’s outlandish behaviour was concerned the Newfoundland Constabulary. In December 1914, Governor Davidson asked both the American Consul in St. John’s and the Justice Minister to conduct an investigation of Rockwell Kent. This investigation concluded that Kent’s open disrespect and disdain for the people of Brigus, his flagrant displays of his sympathy for Germany, his love of German culture, and his attempts to anger the residents of Brigus proved that he was not a spy. They reasoned that no spy would draw such extreme attention to himself. Furthermore, Squires informed the Colonial Secretary that the government could not protect Kent from the ire of Brigus if he continued to antagonize them.⁴⁴⁶

The final straw in the case of Rockwell Kent came in the form of an article, written by Kent titled, “From a British Wilderness,” and published in the American *New Republic* on 22 May 1915. In this article, Kent lamented being a lonely American in a “dismal little British colony.” Kent expressed his distaste for Newfoundland saying: “The thought of the land is stupefied by dogma- the dogma of British virtue, British heroism, sea power, loyalty – all that pile of trash that seems to be a part of the pretension of empire.” He expressed his disgust for Governor Davidson’s demonization of Germans. Perhaps the most inflammatory part of this article came in the conclusion when Kent wondered if *New*

⁴⁴⁵ J.R. Smallwood, *Newfoundland Miscellany* (St. John’s: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1978), 171-172.

⁴⁴⁶ R.A. Squires to J.R. Bennett, Colonial Secretary, 11 January 1915, PANL, GN 1.3.A, Despatch 192.

Republic readers in Germany were praying for their country to “come, capture, transform, [and] annihilate” Newfoundland.⁴⁴⁷

For Governor Davidson, this article was the last straw; he believed that there was “ample evidence officially on record that he is hostile in intention.”⁴⁴⁸ The Justice Department ordered Kent to leave the colony immediately. In August 1915, Kent and his family boarded a steamer bound for New York. Inspector John Byrne, cigar in mouth, met Kent at the docks. Upon seeing Byrne, Kent asked “So you have come down to see me off?” “Yes, [we had] to make sure you really left” replied Byrne. Kent’s final words to Byrne expressed his extreme frustration with Newfoundland: “Fair enough... I hope it was a lot of trouble. I hope your cigar is a bad one. I hope it burns your nose. I hope you slip on the gangplank and fall in the water. I hope the Germans blow up your damned country,” and with that, the alleged German spy left Newfoundland.⁴⁴⁹

While Rockwell Kent drew a great deal of attention from the police, there was another individual who drew even more suspicion: the Norwegian millionaire Christoffer Hannevig. Prior to his arrival in Newfoundland, Hannevig had built a large shipping company with branches in Norway, England, the United States, and Argentina. Hannevig arrived in Newfoundland in June of 1917, after sailing his yacht, the *Adriane*, from Halifax. Following his arrival, Hannevig purchased a tract of land in Harbour Grace and told authorities that he was starting a ship-building operation to supply ships to the United States government.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁷ Rockwell Kent, “From a British Wilderness,” *New Republic*, 22 May 1915.

⁴⁴⁸ Bassler, *Vikings to U-Boats: The German Experience in Newfoundland and Labrador*, 149.

⁴⁴⁹ J.R. Smallwood, *Newfoundland Miscellany*, 174.

⁴⁵⁰ G.H.F Abraham, to British Ambassador, Washington, 13 June 1917, PANL, GN 8.92.

For reasons that are not entirely clear, the Newfoundland government became suspicious of Hannevig immediately after his arrival. After Hannevig established his business in Harbour Grace, he intended to leave the operations in the hands of his Norwegian employees and return to Trondheim. When the Captain of the *Adriane* requested to depart Newfoundland, G.H.F Abraham telegraphed the British Ambassador in Washington, asking him to verify that Hannevig was indeed building ships for the American government.⁴⁵¹ He also told the Ambassador that the *Adriane* would not be allowed to leave Newfoundland until he received confirmation of Hannevig's story. The following day the Ambassador to Washington told Abraham that the United States did not grant Hannevig a contract to build ships for the government. Furthermore, he told Abraham he thought Hannevig was crooked and that the U.S. government would neither give such a contract to a foreign national, nor award it to someone building ships in another country.⁴⁵²

Governor Davidson also found Hannevig extremely suspicious. In a letter to the Prime Minister, he explained that if U-Boats were to operate in North American waters they would need a base to keep supplies and several small and fast vessels to meet U-Boats for a clandestine resupply. Davidson told Morris that in his opinion Hannevig's boat building enterprise was a thinly veiled U-Boat supply operation and recommended the government seize all of Hannevig's ships to prevent him from leaving the Dominion until a thorough investigation could be completed.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ G.H.F Abraham, to British Ambassador, Washington, 13 June 1917, PANL, GN 8.92.

⁴⁵² British Ambassador, Washington to G.H.F Abraham, 14 June 1917, PANL, GN 8.92.

⁴⁵³ W.E. Davidson to E.P. Morris, 14 June 1917, PANL, GN 8.92.

The first investigation into Hannevig consisted of a visit to Hannevig's operation by Inspector O'Rielly of the Newfoundland Constabulary and the monitoring of Hannevig's postal and telegraph communications by Captain G.H.F. Abraham, the local Intelligence Officer. Following this investigation, Abraham was convinced that Hannevig's business interests were legitimate and recommended that the government allow him to conduct business, including the importation of a schooner which had Canadian government was holding pending the outcome of the investigation.⁴⁵⁴

By 1918, Hannevig's shipbuilding enterprise was well established in Harbour Grace and he began to diversify his business and set up whaling stations, pig farms, and fish stores. He also won construction contracts and brought in mineral surveyors to examine the potential for mining operations.⁴⁵⁵ Despite his success as a businessman, Hannevig's activities in Newfoundland again came under suspicion after Charles Alexander Harris replaced Walter Davidson as Governor of the Dominion in 1918. Shortly after his arrival in Newfoundland, Harris asked his secretary, Lt. Col Knox-Niven to write to MI5 and obtain any available intelligence on Hannevig.⁴⁵⁶

By the end of January, Knox-Niven received a response from V.G.W. Kell, the founder of Britain's intelligence service, MI5. Kell told Knox-Niven that Hannevig's company had come under investigation in 1915 when MI5 received information that Hannevig was selling coal to German ships. Scotland Yard had investigated the company on MI5's behalf and Hannevig's brother admitted they were selling coal in Archangel. He

⁴⁵⁴ G.H.F. Abraham to E.P. Morris, 20 June 1917, PANL, GN 8.92.

⁴⁵⁵ E.S. Fraser to David Lloyd George, 1 August 1918, PANL, GN 8.82.

⁴⁵⁶ H.W. Knox-Niven, Personal Secretary Government House to V.G.W. Kell, MI5, 4 January 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, Despatch 9.

insisted they issued strict instructions that coal could neither be sold to vessels suspected of travelling to any destination where Germans could obtain supplies, nor any vessel from a neutral nation that could be in service of Germany. Kell also informed Knox-Niven that Hans Hannevig had been very forthcoming with the investigations, volunteering to turn over the company's books and his personal correspondence. Investigators from Scotland Yard examined these documents thoroughly and found no evidence of wrongdoing.⁴⁵⁷ Though Kell admitted that Christoffer Hannevig's operations in Newfoundland were suspicious, he disclosed there was no evidence that Hannevig was a spy.

Undeterred by the lack of evidence, many government officials believed that Hannevig was working for the Germans.⁴⁵⁸ In May of 1918, C.H. Hutchings received several complaints that two of Hannevig's timber and mineral surveyors were travelling across the island taking photos of sensitive areas of the coast.⁴⁵⁹ Hutchings recommended that newly appointed Prime Minister Lloyd prohibit these from taking photos as they could be used against the British Empire.⁴⁶⁰ Lloyd followed Hutchings' recommendations and ordered the Newfoundland Constabulary to confiscate all of their photographs and cameras. Hannevig's brother Richard complained about having their photographs taken, protesting that he had previously travelled through England and France taking similar photos and had not run into trouble there.⁴⁶¹ P.J. Summers, the Deputy Justice Minister,

⁴⁵⁷ V.G.W Kell to H.W. Knox-Niven, 30 January 1918, PANL, GN 1.3.A, Despatch 9.

⁴⁵⁸ E.P. Morris to H.W. Knox-Niven, 30 January 1918, PANL, GN 8.92, Despatch 9.

⁴⁵⁹ C.H. Hutchings, Inspector General to W.F. Lloyd, Prime Minister, 7 May 1918, GN 8.92.

⁴⁶⁰ When Morris retired from politics in 1918, W.F. Lloyd became Prime Minister as the leader of the National Government.

⁴⁶¹ Richard Hannevig to P.J. Summers, 10 May 1918, PANL, GN 13/1/B, Box 163, File 31.

informed Hannevig that the Justice Department would eventually return his photographs, which they did, over two years later.⁴⁶²

In addition to having his photographs seized, the Justice Department submitted all of Hannevig's operations to very close surveillance. They placed men on board each of Hannevig's whaling vessels to monitor their activities. Governor Harris sent the Commander of H.M.S. *Briton*, Anthony MacDermott, to further investigate Hannevig's operations in June of 1918. In a report to Harris, MacDermott stated that he believed that "the operations of the Company are in no way suspicious and they are not engaged in anything but legitimate business."⁴⁶³

The Justice Department and the Governor were not the only people in Newfoundland who believed Hannevig was a German spy. After the government allowed Hannevig to conduct business in Newfoundland, N.S. Fraser, a surgeon from St. John's, made many complaints to the Newfoundland Constabulary that a spy was operating in Newfoundland. When the government refused to deport or detain Hannevig, Fraser took measures into his own hands. On 1 August 1918, Fraser wrote a letter to Prime Minister Lloyd George, expressing his concerns about Hannevig and the local government's inaction. Fraser informed Lloyd George that Hannevig's operations in Newfoundland were suspicious because he turned down land in areas rich with lumber and instead chose Harbour Grace, which Fraser described as "a little half-dead settlement in Conception Bay immediately opposite Bell Island. There is not a stick of wood for miles around, no water

⁴⁶² P.J. Summers to Richard Hannevig, 14 May 1918, PANL, GN 13/1/B, Box 162, File 31.

⁴⁶³ A. MacDermott, Commander H.M.S. *Briton* to C.A. Harris, Governor, 21 June 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, Despatch 9.

power or anything to commend this place, except its isolation and the innocence of its inhabitants.”⁴⁶⁴

While Hannevig himself did not reside in Newfoundland for very long during the war, his Norwegian managers oversaw his business operations and the local employees. Hannevig’s Norwegian employees faced constant harassment, surveillance, and the threat of deportation from the Constabulary. During the two years that Hannevig operated a business in Newfoundland, the Justice Department deported four of Hannevig’s Norwegian staff and their wives after they were deemed to be undesirable.⁴⁶⁵

Despite the fact that the Justice Department was suspicious of Hannevig and his employees, the government permitted him to operate his business ventures in Newfoundland throughout the entire war. It is interesting that the government allowed Hannevig to operate a business in Newfoundland when it had also deported other residents of neutral countries such as James Hansen or Rockwell Kent. This is likely due to the financial contributions that Hannevig and his company made to the Dominion. Shortly after Hannevig arrived in Newfoundland, he made a large donation of \$6,000 to the local Red Cross, which earned him a great deal of respect among Newfoundlanders.⁴⁶⁶ In addition to this, Hannevig’s various businesses became a major source of employment in Newfoundland, providing the government with enough of a financial incentive allow him to continue to conduct business in Newfoundland.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁴ N.S. Fraser to David Lloyd George, Prime Minister, 1 August 1918, PANL, GN 8.82.

⁴⁶⁵ Bassler, *Vikings to U-Boats*, 159-160.

⁴⁶⁶ “A Generous Donation,” *Evening Telegram*, 19 June 1917.

⁴⁶⁷ Bassler, *Vikings to U-Boats*, 331; In N.S. Fraser’s letter to Lloyd George, he told the Prime Minister that he believed Hannevig’s \$6000 donation to the Red Cross, and the employment he was

Syrians in Newfoundland

Though the Newfoundland Constabulary and Justice Department spent most of their attention on Germans and Austro-Hungarians in Newfoundland, there was a much larger group of residents in Newfoundland who came from a belligerent nation. In 1914, the second largest minority group in Newfoundland were Syrians who immigrated to Newfoundland from the Ottoman Empire.

Though Newfoundlanders referred to these immigrants from the Ottoman Empire as Syrians, Assyrians, Maronites, or Turks, the majority of them were Maronite Christians from Mount Lebanon. Syrian immigration to Newfoundland began in the mid-19th century amid brutal religious conflicts between Maronite Christians and the Druze during the Mount Lebanon Civil War. The majority of Syrians who came to Newfoundland were small business owners and quickly set up many small businesses in population centres such as the St. John's and Bay of Islands districts.

As part of the British Empire's initial monitoring of enemy aliens, Lewis Harcourt, Secretary of State for the Colonies directed the Newfoundland government to treat any reservists from the Ottoman Empire as they would reservists from Germany or Austria-Hungary.⁴⁶⁸ Furthermore, on 7 November 1914, Harcourt suggested that the Newfoundland government detain any Ottoman citizens residing in Newfoundland.⁴⁶⁹

providing to Newfoundlanders caused the Government to turn a blind eye to the fact that Hannevig was spying for the German Empire.

⁴⁶⁸ Lewis Harcourt, Secretary of State for the Colonies to W.E. Davidson, 5 November 1914, PANL, GN 1/10/0.

⁴⁶⁹ Lewis Harcourt to W.E. Davidson, 7 November 1914, PANL, GN 1/10/0.

In many ways, the Syrian community would have made an easy target for suspicion and hostility for Newfoundlanders and the Newfoundland government. Like Germans subjects, Ottoman subjects in Newfoundland came from a nation with which the British Empire was at war. Like Germans, they spoke another language and they would have spoken English with an accent. One would think that their nationality and language would have resulted in suspicion, accusations of spying, and hostility just as they did for Germans and Austro-Hungarians residing in Newfoundland. This was not the case. The Constabulary neither detained, monitored, nor investigated any Syrians and there is not a shred of evidence that any civilian or government official was suspicious of them. In fact, after Richard Squires received word from Harcourt that Newfoundland must detain Ottoman citizens, he wrote Harcourt demanding that Syrians be removed from the list of enemy aliens because they were law abiding, loyal, quiet, hardworking, and had generously given to the NPA.⁴⁷⁰

One of the reasons that the Syrian community escaped persecution during First World War was a concerted effort on behalf of Syrian residents to become ingrained in Newfoundland society. A primary example of this was their involvement in the religious life of Newfoundland. As Maronite Christians, the Catholic Church readily accepted the Syrian community as part of the Catholic community. As such, Catholic churches across Newfoundland were eager to host Maronite priests and for years before the war Syrian priests came from Boston and New York to provide religious services to Syrians in their native language.⁴⁷¹ These visitations occurred yearly and often began with a mass at the

⁴⁷⁰ Lewis Harcourt to W.E. Davidson, 31 December 14, PANL, GN 1/1/7.

⁴⁷¹ "Mass in the Language of Our Lord," *The Evening Telegram*, 27 July 1908.

Catholic Cathedral in St. John's, followed by mass in other communities across Newfoundland.⁴⁷² Masses given by Maronite priests were popular not only among the Syrian community but those who wanted to hear a service given in the "language of the lord."⁴⁷³ When Father Soaib, a Syrian priest from New Glasgow, held service in the "Syrian Language" in 1913, it was widely attended by residents of St. John's and the service was described by one newspaper as "strange but beautiful."⁴⁷⁴

In addition to their service to the Catholic Church, the Syrian community also made a strong commitment to philanthropic work in their new home. A group of Syrians living on Bell Island founded a major charitable organization in 1910, when they created the Syrian Charitable Society of St. Joseph (also known as the Syrian Benevolent Society). This society, formed by Father Sapp, called on Syrians in Newfoundland to "lend a helping hand to those of their country and others who were in distress." Father Sapp told Syrians that though they sought refuge under the shield of Britain, they should reach out their hand towards the less fortunate in their new communities. The editor of the *Evening Telegram* was so impressed by the Syrian Benevolent Society that he wrote: to know [the Syrians] is to admire them, for removed from us Northernmen in custom, manner, and dialect, when once they come amongst us, they change into exemplary citizens..."⁴⁷⁵

The Syrian Benevolent Society wasted no time in gathering donations and holding fundraisers for their charitable work.⁴⁷⁶ One of their first charitable donations was an

⁴⁷² "Mission to Maronites," *Evening Telegram*, 8 September 1910.

⁴⁷³ "Mass in the Language of Our Lord," *The Evening Telegram*, 27 July 1908.

⁴⁷⁴ "Said Mass," *Evening Telegram*, 4 August 1913.

⁴⁷⁵ "He that Giveth to the Poor Lendeth to the Lord," *Evening Telegram*, 22 September 1910.

⁴⁷⁶ "Here and There," *The Evening Telegram*, 27 April 1912.

expensive bell and altar for the Catholic Cathedral in St. John's.⁴⁷⁷ To accept this donation, Archbishop Roche travelled to Bell Island and personally thanked the Syrian Benevolent Society:

To our worthy people of the Syrian race and Maronite rite who dwell among us I must this day address a special word of congratulations. You are to-day making two beautiful and costly [presentations] to the Church, an altar and a bell. These will, for generations to come, stand forth as monuments to your faith and generosity... I am sure here in Newfoundland you will hold sacred the traditions of your Faith and Country and keep your names unsullied as good and upright citizens of your adopted country.⁴⁷⁸

Another major philanthropic contribution by the Syrian Benevolent Society was a night school the organization built on Bell Island. The project was the idea of the President of the Syrian Benevolent Society, Michael Carbage, who wanted to provide a way for young men to get an education in the evening, while working in the mines during the day. In addition to the night school, the Benevolent Society constructed living quarters on the floor above the school. Carbage intended to use these living quarters to house men who came to Bell Island looking for work in the mines. The Benevolent society would allow unemployed men to live in these quarters while they were looking for work. After 24 hours, if the men did not find work, the Society would try and help them find work or pay their fare back to St. John's.⁴⁷⁹

In addition to their charitable work, another factor that contributed to Syrian acceptance into Newfoundland society was their public displays of patriotism after the war broke out. In 1914, in response to Newfoundland's war effort, the Syrian Benevolent

⁴⁷⁷ "Episcopal Visitation at Bell Island," *Evening Telegram*, 4 July 1912.

⁴⁷⁸ "Episcopal Visitation at Bell Island," *Evening Telegram*, 4 July 1912.

⁴⁷⁹ "Syrian Society's Charitable Work," *Evening Telegram*, 24 April 1913.

Association formed a separate branch, the Syrian Patriotic Fund. Kaleem Noah, a manager of a dry goods business in St. John's, managed this fund. Its sole mandate was to raise money for Newfoundland's war effort. Within four months of the start of the war, the Syrian Patriotic Fund had raised nearly \$400.⁴⁸⁰ In addition to making contributions to the Syrian Patriotic Fund, many government officials in Newfoundland recognized the generous contributions Syrians were making to the Newfoundland Patriotic Association.⁴⁸¹

The financial contributions made by the Syrian community in Newfoundland were not simply charitable contributions but also expressions of patriotism, which the Syrian community were eager to show. When the Syrian Patriotic Fund presented W.E. Davidson with their first \$100 contribution, they wrote to him saying the Syrians of Newfoundland were "proud to find that [Newfoundland] is taking such an active part in contributing to the upkeep of the Union Jack, which brings equal rights and justice wherever it waves."⁴⁸²

The patriotic displays of the Syrian community earned them respect among many citizens and government officials. After receiving a deputation from the Syrian Committee, Governor Davidson wrote in his diary that the Syrian community, despite their reputation for "turbulence and cruelty," made excellent citizens in Newfoundland. He remarked that the success of Syrians living in Newfoundland was proof that "you can turn the most unpromising material into good citizens if you treat them well." He qualified their success

⁴⁸⁰ "Assyrian Patriotic Fund," *Evening Telegram*,

⁴⁸¹ Lewis Harcourt to W.E. Davidson, 31 December 14, PANL, GN 1/1/7; and W.E. Davidson, Personal Diary, 19 February 1915

⁴⁸² A.B. Sapp, St. Joseph's Syrian Benevolent Society to W.E. Davidson, 12 November 1914, PANL, GN 1/10/0.

by noting that many Syrians had enlisted in the Newfoundland Regiment, liberally gave to the patriotic fund, and showed great enthusiasm for British institutions.⁴⁸³

In addition to the Governor, other members of the Newfoundland government showed a great respect for the Syrian community. On 13 April 1915, Walter Jennings, addressed the house during a discussion on the Naturalization of Aliens Bill. He expressed his belief that Syrians were undesirable, complained that they do not keep the sabbath, and suggested that they provide no benefit to the Dominion. In response to this statement, William Higgins told the House that Syrians were devout people who kept the sabbath, were of great benefit to Newfoundland, and declared that he would not allow their name to be sullied in the House of Assembly.⁴⁸⁴

By the winter of 1915, many Syrians in Newfoundland were concerned about the fate of their family members who remained in the Ottoman Empire. In February, a group of Syrians visited Governor Davidson and expressed their concern over their families in Damascus. They heard that Turkish soldiers were executing church leaders, and mistreating women and village elders. As a result of this meeting, Davidson wrote a letter to Lewis Harcourt. He explained that Newfoundland had a “considerable colony” of Syrians and they were becoming desperate for news from their home. He told Harcourt that the Syrians in Newfoundland were an industrious, law abiding community who had sent many young men to enlist in the Regiment. Davidson requested that Harcourt send him information on

⁴⁸³ W.E. Davidson, Personal Diary, 19 February 1915, PANL, MG 136.5.

⁴⁸⁴ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 13 April 1915; and “Proceedings at the House of Assembly,” *Mail and Advocate*, 14 April 1915.

the situation in Mount Lebanon so he could ease the minds of the Syrian community with news of their kinsfolk.⁴⁸⁵

In one particular case, Kalim Noah contacted J.R. Bennett, the Colonial Secretary, and requested assistance in contacting his sons Sakr and Wanis who were attending university at the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut. Noah had not heard from his sons in three months and was concerned that they had been killed. Governor Davidson agreed to look into the case, as it was forbidden for British citizens to send correspondence to the Ottoman Empire. Davidson sent a telegram to Cecil Spring-Rice and requested that he send a telegraph, which the Governor would pay for personally, to the American Consul General in Beirut to inquire about Noah's sons. Later in January, Davidson received a telegram from Spring-Rice that informed him that the American Consul in Beirut had sent word through the Embassy in Rome that Sakr and Wanis were alive and well.⁴⁸⁶ Governor Davidson's eagerness to help the Syrian community contact their loved ones in the Ottoman Empire show just how strongly that he felt about their place in Newfoundland. His gesture of paying for Kalim Nuh's telegraph is nothing short of remarkable. Not only was he willing to help Noah contact his sons, which was forbidden by law, he was willing to personally pay for the telegraph.

The treatment of the Syrian community by the Newfoundland government is a very interesting case in the reconstruction of citizenship during the First World War. While Newfoundlanders treated Germans, Austro-Hungarians, Americans, Russians, Italians, and

⁴⁸⁵ W.E. Davidson to Lewis Harcourt, 19 February 1915, PANL, GN 1/10/0.

⁴⁸⁶ W.E. Davidson to Cecil Spring-Rice, 20 January 1915, PANL, 1914 Despatch 190.

Norwegians with deep suspicion and often outright hostility, the Syrian community wholly escaped persecution.⁴⁸⁷

Conclusion

During the First World War, Newfoundland underwent a profound renegotiation of ethnic perceptions. The complex geopolitical realities of the war meant that Newfoundlanders found themselves fighting a war against Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire. As a result, there was a profound restructuring of basic assumptions of precisely who deserved protection from the state and who the state should protect citizens from. As ethnic categories shifted, so too was the concept of the liberal individual. Prior to the war, Germans, Austro-Hungarians, Norwegians, and Americans were all granted the status of individuals by the liberal state and received its protection. However, as the war caused the Newfoundlanders to demand protection from alleged German spies, these people were denied the status as liberal individuals and were not afforded equal treatment under the law.

While some ethnic groups were stripped of their status as liberal individuals, the Syrian community in Newfoundland found itself not persecuted but praised and protected by the government. While this community was visible minority, who spoke a different language, and emigrated from a belligerent nation, they faced none of the suspicion that

⁴⁸⁷ It is important to note that although the Syrian community escaped persecution during the war and became respected citizens of the Dominion, they did not escape racism while living in Newfoundland. Though Governor Davidson spoke highly of Newfoundland's Syrian community, he referred to them as "unpromising material" who were improved by life in the British Empire. Similarly, while Archbishop Roche praised the Syrian community for their charitable works he cautioned them to "keep their names unsullied."

Germans, Austro-Hungarians, or even individuals from neutral nations faced. Their commitment to charity (particularly the Syrian Patriotic Fund) and their public expressions of support for the British war effort won the hearts of the Newfoundland government. Instead of being persecuted as potential spies, they were lauded as model citizens and defended by members of the Newfoundland government.

The difference in treatment between German, Austro-Hungarian, and Syrian Newfoundlanders proves just how powerful the reconfiguration of ethnic perceptions was to the liberal state. Equality under the law was a core element of classical liberalism and while it was never evenly applied it was still held as a societal ideal. During the war, however, the government abandoned liberal ideals of the equality of the individual as native-born citizens of Newfoundland demanded protection from the spies they thought were lurking around every corner. Conversely, as Syrians were held as ideal citizens during the war, they received greater praise and protection from the state. In many regards, the treatment of “enemy aliens” during the war shows that the Newfoundland government was much more concerned with doing what they believed was in the best interest of the community, than they were in protecting foreign born Newfoundlanders

Chapter 5: Recruiting

Introduction

Following the declaration of war against Germany in 1914, the British Empire quickly needed to recruit a substantial number of troops. Prior to the First World War, the British army acted mostly as a colonial police force, fighting poorly armed and insufficiently trained opponents in British colonies. In this period Britain supported war efforts by relying on its powerful navy while providing financial aid to its allies.⁴⁸⁸ While most European nations had long relied on compulsory military service, Britain relied on voluntary recruitment. As a result of their compulsory military service, Germany and Austria-Hungary had standing armies and reserves of 4,500,000 and 3,000,000 respectively. Comparatively, Britain's standing armies and reserves only amounted to approximately 100,000. This vast discrepancy in available troops meant that Britain had to recruit a tremendous amount of soldiers to keep up with the Germany Army. The resulting campaign of voluntary enlistment relied on reconfiguring concepts of ethnicity and gender to portray soldiering as the pinnacle of masculinity and a duty that every male citizen owed to the state.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁸ For more on British war strategy see: David French, *British Strategy and War Aims, 1914-1916* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986); Brock Millman, *Pessimism and British War Policy, 1916-1918* (London: Frank Cass, 2001); and Simon Robbins, *British Generalship and the Western Front, 1914-1918: Defeat into Victory* (London: Frank Cass, 2005).

⁴⁸⁹ For more on Ethnicity and Gender in British recruiting see: Lois Bibbings, *Telling Tales about Men: Conceptions of Conscientious Objectors to Military Service During the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); Nicoletta Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons, Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War* (New York: Palgrave

Newfoundland's recruitment campaign was in many ways similar to Britain's. On 4 August 1914, Governor Davidson notified the people of Newfoundland that they were at war with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The residents of Newfoundland, and St. John's in particular, greeted this news with great enthusiasm as thousands took to the streets singing patriotic songs. On 12 August, hundreds of people flocked to the C.L.B. Armory in St. John's to hear Davidson's announcement that the Dominion would equip, train, and send 500 men to fight with the British Expeditionary Force.

In an unusual arrangement, Prime Minister Morris gave the responsibility of raising and maintaining the Regiment to the Newfoundland Patriotic Association (NPA), a civilian organization which comprised Walter Davidson as the chairman and 25 other private citizens. Governor Davidson told the local press that the government handed responsibility to the NPA to keep Newfoundland's war effort free from the messiness of party politics. The NPA held its inaugural meeting on 17 August and split itself into six subcommittees that would organize the recruitment, equipment, training, and transportation of the men for the Newfoundland Regiment. Sixteen days after the war began, the NPA began recruiting in earnest. They sent letters to the Magistrates in each of Newfoundland's 18 districts requesting that each of them form local branches of the NPA, hold public meetings, and forward any names of citizens who would like to enlist. Various branches of the Newfoundland government put up notices in public areas; and churches across the island

Macmillan, 2002); and Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain*. (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

gave sermons that encouraged recruiting. By the end of August, the recruiting efforts of the NPA had reached every settlement on the Island.⁴⁹⁰

The NPA's initial recruiting blitz was highly successful. By 3 September, nearly 750 men had enlisted and another 130 would enlist by the end of the month, bringing the total to 880. Of those who enlisted, the NPA deemed just over 500 fit for duty.⁴⁹¹ Despite the initial success and the departure of the first 500 from Newfoundland, the NPA had much more work to do. By November, the British government informed the NPA that they would need to raise a regiment of over 1050 for the Newfoundland Regiment to function as a distinct regiment in the British Expeditionary Force.⁴⁹²

Recruiting for the second contingent began on 30 November 1914 and enthusiasm for enlistment had not waned in St. John's with 179 enlisting on the first day of the recruiting drive.⁴⁹³ Despite the enthusiasm in St. John's, the NPA and the general public were concerned about recruiting rates in rural Newfoundland as the vast majority of recruits were coming from the city. The editor of the *Western Star* expressed his concern in an article titled "Second Contingent: What Will the Outports Do?" In this article, the editor called on the men of rural Newfoundland to do their duty, as the men of St. John's had done:

What about the young unmarried men of the West Coast? Are they content to let St. John's get all the honours? Does not the fire of patriotism and the same love of country burn in the breasts of the outport men, if so, now is the time to show it!

⁴⁹⁰ Chris Sharpe, "The Right Course, The Best Course, The Only Course: Voluntary Recruitment in the Newfoundland Regiment, 1914-1918" *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, 2007(1), 58.

⁴⁹¹ "Patriotism Leads Large Number of Men to Enlist," *Mail and Advocate*, 3 September 1914; and Chris Sharpe, "The Right Course," 59.

⁴⁹² O'Brien, "Out of a Clear Sky," 410.

⁴⁹³ O'Brien, "Out of a Clear Sky; "No Place for Slackers," *Evening Telegram*, 29 November 1916., " 410-411.

Your country needs you, and we are not unmindful of our duties as citizens of a Great Empire we should be ready to defend it. Citizenship carries with it duties and obligations as well as rights. It is not enough for us to sing “God save the king;” we must be ready to practice. Now is the time to do so. Lip loyalty or flag flapping never saved a country from the armed tread of a foe. The type of men capable of bearing arms and withstanding the rigors of war are in the outports. We want to see them take their places in the ranks of the empire defenders. Now is the time. Here is the opportunity. Will we avail of it? Your country needs you. Will you hark to its call? If so, go to the nearest Magistrate and enlist.⁴⁹⁴

This call for rural men to enlist in the Newfoundland Regiment was typical of attempts to encourage rural and urban men to enlist. While initial calls for recruiting relied on patriotism, once the first wave of recruits had enlisted and enthusiasm began to slow, recruiting efforts played on Newfoundlanders’ concepts of both their ethnicity as “Britishers” and their masculinity. Throughout the war, the recruiting campaign would reconstruct concepts of gender and ethnicity and renegotiate the relationship between male citizens and the state. While other chapters in this dissertation take a chronological approach, this chapter will be thematic, focusing on several themes of gender and ethnicity that the NPA relied on to encourage, shame, and eventually coerce men to enlist with the Newfoundland Regiment.

“Motherland takes precedence to Mothers”

In *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain*, Jessica Meyer argued that British soldiers displayed two very different constructions of themselves as men. One construction focused on men as providers, good husbands, and fathers. The other

⁴⁹⁴ “Second Contingent: What Will the Outports Do?” *Western Star*, 9 December 1914.

focused on themselves as protectors, soldiers, and defenders of the nation.⁴⁹⁵ Prior to the First World War, Newfoundland society pinned masculine identities to men's roles as providers, fathers, and husbands. Since the mid-19th century, Britain and other parts of the British Empire such as Canada, had begun to portray military service as an additional, important aspect of men's masculine identity.⁴⁹⁶ Without a permanent military presence, Newfoundlanders put less emphasis on the protector identity, but this changed as recruiters used appeals to masculinity as a means to fill the ranks of the Regiment and Naval Reserve.⁴⁹⁷

The importance of men's roles as protectors and defenders began with recruiters who argued that by enlisting in the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve (NRNR) or NR (Newfoundland Regiment), men were not only defending Britain but also defending Newfoundland. The *Evening Telegram* published an early example of this argument in a letter to the editor by a writer writing under the pseudonym "The Mark." In this letter, The Mark said that if Britain lost the war, Germany would seek to annex British colonies, particularly South Africa and Newfoundland, and would use Newfoundland as a naval base. The Mark argued that life would be tough for Newfoundlanders under German rule.

⁴⁹⁵ Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 161-162.

⁴⁹⁶ For more on the pre-war relationship between masculinity and military service see: Mark Moss, *Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Mike O'Brien, "Manhood and the Militia Myth: Masculinity, Class and Militarism in Ontario, 1902-1914." *Labour / Le Travail*. 42 (Fall 1998): 115-141.

⁴⁹⁷ In this paper, I use the term "recruiter" to refer to anybody engaged in recruiting efforts whether they were associated with the NPA or not. I have chosen this term because most of the recruiting efforts in Newfoundland were not directly organized by the NPA. Many private citizens, newspapers, religious officials, and politicians gave speeches, wrote letters, published articles, and generally worked towards the same goal. While there was no central authority for much of this recruiting material, very distinct trends can be seen amongst recruiters.

He said that every male citizen would be conscripted into the Army or Navy for three years, have to pay heavy taxes, and have very few political rights. The Mark concluded his letter by challenging the masculinity of Newfoundlanders. He said that over a thousand of Newfoundland's bravest had stepped forward but if "tens of thousands of cowards stay at home while Frenchmen and Russians fight for them" than only God will be able to save Newfoundland.⁴⁹⁸

One month after this letter appeared in the *Evening Telegram*, William Temple, the editor of the *Twillingate Sun*, expressed a similar opinion. On 5 February 1915, Temple lamented that few men from Twillingate had enlisted. He reminded his readers that many of the young men who refused to enlist would be fathers one day. He questioned whether these men's children would one day cheer their fathers for fighting to preserve freedom or would they groan under the heavy heel of German soldiers while cursing the day they were born.⁴⁹⁹ By encouraging men to think about their children's futures, Temple was suggesting that it was not enough for men to provide for their children – they also had a responsibility to enlist and protect the young from German aggression.

In an article published in 1915, W.F. Lloyd, then editor of the *Evening Telegram*, gave more credibility to the notion that Germany desired to seize British colonies. Lloyd provided a quotation, supposedly from the German Colonial Minister, which stated that following a German victory, the German government would seek to increase German overseas colonies to provide Germany with increased natural resources. The editor pointed out that the Krupp company had purchased iron ore from Newfoundland before the war

⁴⁹⁸ Newfoundland as a German Colony," *Evening Telegram*, 6 January 1915.

⁴⁹⁹ "Twillingate Shaking Herself," *Twillingate Sun*, 6 February 1915.

and the German government knew of the mine's value. He warned the readers Germany wanted British colonial possessions and reminded the young men of Newfoundland that they must fight until Germany was no longer a threat to the Dominion.⁵⁰⁰

The perceived threat of Germany to Newfoundland grew stronger in July of 1916 when the merchant U-Deutschland crossed the Atlantic and arrived in Baltimore. Before this, the British Admiralty thought the possibility of U-Boats attacks in the Atlantic were a remote possibility. This possibility became a reality when the heavily armed German U53 docked in New Port, Rhode Island on 7 October 1916. The following day U53 attacked and sunk the Dutch *Blommersdijk*; the Norwegian *Christian Knutsen*; the British *Strathdene* and *West Point*; and the Newfoundland *Stephano*, owned by the Bowring Brothers.⁵⁰¹ When the news of *Stephano* reached St. John's, even though there were no casualties, it sent shockwaves through Dominion.⁵⁰²

A month after U53 sunk the *Stephano*, the editor of the *Western Star* played on the emerging fear of U-boats to encourage men to join the NRNR. Barrett said that the few U-boat voyages to the United States were only a small sample of what was coming. He believed it would not be long until German U-boats were attacking Newfoundland's fishing vessels on the Grand Banks.⁵⁰³ He told his readers that Britain was building as many ships as they possibly could in order to regain their dominance over the seas and to protect Newfoundland. He implored his readers to sign up for the NRNR because these British vessels desperately needed crews: "Now these ships must be crewed, Newfoundlanders are

⁵⁰⁰ "German Hunger for Our Colonies," *Evening Telegram*, 17 November 1915.

⁵⁰¹ Westcott, *Defending the Dominions*, 46-47.

⁵⁰² "News Came as Great Shock," *Mail and Advocate*, 9 October 1916.

⁵⁰³ "More Men, And Yet More Men: We Want Them Now," *Western Star*, 8 November 1916.

amongst the best sailors of the world, and they have proven themselves to be second to none for bravery and endurance, and we believe that they are without peers in loyalty.”⁵⁰⁴

The threat of submarine warfare played constantly on the minds of Newfoundlanders. In a Dominion where the majority of the population made their living by the sea, the threat of U-Boat attacks meant that while most Newfoundlanders lived on the home front, they fished on the frontlines. On 28 November, the *Mail and Advocate* published an article calling for a total war effort to defend Newfoundland against the “submarine menace.” In this article, the editor stated that U-boat attacks in Newfoundland waters were inevitable and the Dominion had to do everything it could to defend against them including the recruitment of 2,000 more men for the NRNR and the NR.⁵⁰⁵

In another article from the *Daily News*, a writer from Grand Falls painted a grim picture of what would happen to Newfoundland if Britain lost the war. He wrote:

Imagine, if you can, the imperial flag of Germany floating to our hitherto free Newfoundland breezes, and remember that, were that to happen, every mother’s son, and the husbands of thousands of Newfoundland women, would be compelled to serve – not invited – in the armies of Germany, and at a daily wage of six or eight cents, be sent hither or thither, at the crack of their Hunnish task masters’ whip, to slay and be slain, - perchance to carry death and destruction to their cousins in Canada and the United States.⁵⁰⁶

Here, the *Daily News* used the threat of German conscription to encourage men to enlist.

In essence, the editor was telling men that they had two options: voluntarily enlist with the Newfoundland Regiment or be conscripted into the German Army.

⁵⁰⁴ “More Men, And Yet More Men: We Want Them Now,” *Western Star*, 8 November 1916.

⁵⁰⁵ “The Submarine Menace,” *Mail and Advocate*, 28 November 1916.

⁵⁰⁶ “Grand Falls’ Response,” *Daily News*, 26 February 1916.

Once recruiters had established that the war with Germany was not only a threat to the British Empire but a direct threat to Newfoundland, they worked hard to emphasize men's traditional masculine roles of protectors. Initially, the recruiting campaign did not wholly prioritize men's roles as protectors over their roles as providers and they acknowledged that men had a primary duty to support their family and a secondary duty to defend the Empire. The NPA's insistence that early recruiting for the Regiment and Reserve focus only on unmarried men. This shows that in the eyes of the NPA men had greater responsibilities to their families than they did the state.

In November 1914, the *Daily News* published an article that demonstrated this principle. The editor outlined a list of reasons why young men should enlist. These reasons included: to defend the British Empire, the cradle of freedom and the fountain of justice; to defend the rights of small nations; to defend the sacredness of treaties, which Germany violated; to destroy German militarism; to save Newfoundland from becoming a German naval station that would conscript Newfoundland men; to prevent their children from speaking German; and to defend their mothers, sisters, homes, churches, and businesses. In creating this list, the editor articulated the importance of men as defenders of not just their home but the world. Despite this, the editor maintained that not all men have a duty to fight. He argued: "Any young man who is unmarried, and without responsibility for a family's support, the call is one of Duty. To others, it becomes one of conscience."⁵⁰⁷ In this statement, the editor of the *Daily News* made it clear that a man's primary responsibility is to provide for his family, while his duty to defend the nation came second.

⁵⁰⁷ "The Call of Duty," *Daily News*, 30 November 1914.

The editor of the *Twillingate Sun* also believed that the responsibility of defending the nation fell to the single men of Newfoundland. In an article titled “What Civilization Means,” William Temple declared that making sacrifices separated civilized people from barbarians. According to Temple, married men already sacrificed most their personal freedom, rights, time, and money for the greater good of the community. Temple described single men as barbarians who spent all of their money on themselves and did as they pleased. Temple argued that St. John’s was far more civilized than rural Newfoundland because the single men of St. John’s enlisted in much higher numbers and made greater sacrifices.⁵⁰⁸ By arguing that self-sacrifice was a prime characteristic of civilized masculinity, Temple insinuated that low recruiting rates in rural areas meant that rural Newfoundlanders were both less civilized and less masculine.

After recruiters in Newfoundland established a narrative that all unmarried men had a duty to defend the Empire, they challenged the notion that unmarried men had a primary responsibility to help their parents provide for their families. In February of 1916, the *Daily News* published a message from the Grand Falls branch of the NPA. The message said there were hundreds of men across Newfoundland whose parents discouraged them from enlisting but were nonetheless willing to enlist:

In all matters that affect the individual only, a son’s first responsibility is to his parents. But when the integrity of the nation is at issue; when the lives, the safety, and the honour of women, children, and the aged are threatened; when British freedom as at stake; and when all that our fathers fought and bled for is in the balance, there is even a great duty than that of son to parent, the duty of humanity.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁸ “What Civilization Means,” *Twillingate Sun*, 28 November 1914.

⁵⁰⁹ “Grand Falls’ Response,” *Daily News*, 26 February 1916.

In this statement the writer admitted that under normal circumstances young men had a gendered expectation to help their parents to provide for their family. However, given the unprecedented circumstances of the war, a man's responsibility shifted from his parents to the state and his masculine duty to protect came before his duty to provide.

In the House of Assembly, W.F. Lloyd expressed concern that parents were standing in the way of unmarried men enlisting. He told the House that it was only natural for mother and fathers to want to protect their sons, keep them out of harm's way, and encourage them not to enlist. Despite this natural inclination, Lloyd warned that parents' love for their children was something that must be overcome by recruiters. He said that it was the duty of the government to overcome this hurdle by teaching parents that their love of their child came second to the love of their country: "But this is an influence with which it becomes us to deal. It is the natural affection that a parent has for a son. Just the love that cannot bear to think of the son killed, maimed, and disabled for life; but paramount above this love of son is love of country, and the need is great."⁵¹⁰ In this statement, W.F. Lloyd told the Dominion that the defense of the nation should be placed before the defense of one's own children.

R.J. Devereaux, a People's Party M.H.A. for Placentia, further emphasized the duty of parents to send their unmarried sons to the frontlines. In a speech to the House of Assembly in 1917, Devereaux exalted those who gave their lives for Britain and said that they were closer to God than anyone else. Mr. Devereaux said that parents who lost sons in the war held a special place in society. In Devereaux's mind, the place of bereaved

⁵¹⁰ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 16 March 1916.

parents in Newfoundland society was so honoured, that he was envious of parents whose sons had died fighting for the Empire.⁵¹¹ Devereaux's pleas for parents to encourage their sons to enlist and his suggestion that it was an honour to lose a son was rather disingenuous, as he had only daughters and would never know the pain of losing a child to the war.⁵¹²

Initially, recruiters focused their efforts on unmarried men. They argued unmarried men had a greater duty to fight than they did to help their parents provide for their families. This would change when enlistment rates dropped off in 1917 and the Department of Militia struggled to fill the ranks of the Newfoundland Regiment. On 12 October 1917, J.R. Bennett published an appeal in newspapers across Newfoundland imploring men to do their duty and enlist for military service. Bennett informed the public that the government would be offering separation allowances to married men and unmarried men with dependents.⁵¹³ The policy of separation allowances would change the gendered language of recruiting efforts in the Dominion. Prior to this, the recruiters argued that unmarried men had to enlist so married men could stay at home and provide for their families. Now, the government was telling married men that the government would provide for their families so men could fulfil their true masculine duties, prioritizing men's identities as protectors over their identities as providers.⁵¹⁴

Prior to the adoption of an official separation allowance, the NPA provided soldiers with support for their dependents on a case by case basis. The goal of NPA was to bring soldier's pay up to their pre-war salaries (minus the food, clothing, and rent a soldier would

⁵¹¹ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 30 May 1917.

⁵¹² "The Late R.J. Devereaux," *Newfoundland Quarterly* (Summer 1920), 20.

⁵¹³ "An Appeal to the People of Newfoundland," *Evening Advocate*, 12 October 1917.

⁵¹⁴ "A Crisis," *Evening Advocate*, 31 October 1917.

normally pay) by augmenting their regimental pay through funds raised by the NPA. For instance, if a soldier earned \$10 a month before the war, sent home \$5 per month to his family, and the NPA approved his application for support, then they would provide his family with an additional \$2.50, bringing the total money paid to his family to \$7.50.⁵¹⁵ While this sounds generous, the NPA was criticized for rejecting many soldiers who needed assistance and not providing sufficient support for those who were approved. In one article, H.M Mosdell, editor of the St. John's *Daily Star*, implored the government to follow Canada's lead in providing separation allowances and pensions. Mosdell argued that without the government stepping in to provide for soldier's families, married men would never enlist in large numbers.⁵¹⁶ In addition to the men they rejected, the NPA did not take into account that rural Newfoundland relied on household labour to prosecute the fishery. While the NPA could replace the wages that a soldier would have made fishing, they could not replace the knowledge and labour that was necessary for the remainder of a soldier's family to earn a living catching and curing fish.

Bennett designed the separation allowance to help support the dependents of men who wanted to enlist. Newfoundland's adoption of an allowance was inspired by the Canadian separation allowance, which was believed to have helped many married men to enlist in the Canadian Expeditionary Force.⁵¹⁷ The allowance defined dependents as wives and children; motherless children; widowed mothers; and mothers who required support because their husbands cannot support them. If a soldier had a dependent in any of these

⁵¹⁵ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 3 July 1917,

⁵¹⁶ "As We See It," *St. John's Daily Star*, 26 January 1917.

⁵¹⁷ *Proceedings of the Legislative Council*, 3 July 1917.

categories he would receive a monthly allowance in addition to his pay that was based on his rank. Privates and Corporals received \$20 a month; Sergeants received \$25; Warrant Officers and Lieutenants received \$30; Captains received \$40; Majors received \$50; and anyone above the rank of Major received \$60.⁵¹⁸

Despite the increased amount of money soldiers received from the separation allowance, some soldiers claimed that \$20 a month was not sufficient for women to support a household and would not encourage married men to enlist. In December of 1914, a frequent columnist to the *Evening Telegram*, writing under the Pseudonym “Patriot,” commented on Canada’s recent increase to its separation allowance from \$20 to \$25. In addition to the Canadian separation allowance, every Canadian soldier was required to send home \$15 a month to their families for a total of \$40 per month. Patriot argued that the government had a duty to provide for families whose dependants were fighting in France and that they should ensure Newfoundland soldiers were being treated as well as Canadian soldiers.⁵¹⁹

In another article from the *Evening Telegram*, the editor pondered the reasons for Newfoundland’s low enlistment rates. He proposed that Regiment’s low rate of pay might have discouraged single men and the low separation allowance might have discouraged married men from enlisting. The editor argued that no man with dependents would join the ranks of the Regiment if he thought that his family would not be taken care of after he left for France. The editor pointed out that instead of imposing conscription the Australian

⁵¹⁸ “Published by Authority,” *St. John’s Daily Star*, 17 October 1917.

⁵¹⁹ “Thoughts Upon the Times,” *Evening Telegram*, 29 December 1917.

government decided to raise their separation allowance by 30%.⁵²⁰ He believed that increasing the soldier's pay and separation allowance would increase enlistment rates because: "No married man is going to leave his family to suffer if he is not satisfied that the separation allowance is sufficient to cover the expenses of his household."⁵²¹

The separation allowance provided recruiters with a strong argument for all men, even those with dependants, to enlist. Recruiting advertisements published in the *Evening Telegram* informed readers that the government was willing to do everything they could to make it easier for men to enlist. All men would receive a free doctor's exam from the nearest doctor to their community. Men from rural Newfoundland would receive free passage to the recruiting center in St. John's and if the recruiting center rejected them, they would be given free passage home. Finally, and most importantly, the advertisements emphasized that any men with children or parents dependent on them would receive an additional \$20 a month on top of their regimental pay so they could support their families while they were away.⁵²²

Once the government offered to pay a separation allowance to married men and single men with dependants, recruiters began to target married men in their speeches, articles, and letters. In October of 1917, for example, "The Sentinel" a regular columnist for the *Evening Telegram*, called on the government to enact conscription because men were not living up to their masculine duties. Speaking directly to those who had not yet

⁵²⁰ The *Evening Telegram's* account of conscription in Australia is not entirely accurate. While Australia never imposed conscription, compulsory military service was not avoided by raising the separation allowance. In 1916 and 1917, The Australian government held two plebiscites on the conscription issue. Both of these plebiscites failed.

⁵²¹ "Something Must be Done," *Evening Telegram*, 28 February 1918.

⁵²² "Filling the Gaps: The Regimental Recruiting Roster," *Evening Telegram*, 9 April 1918.

enlisted, Sentinel wrote: “and to those of you who remain at home and selfishly leave these real men to fight for your parents, your wife, your children, when you could just as easily go as not, you are not men, you are merely male inhabitants of Newfoundland.”⁵²³ By arguing that men with wives and children must enlist, Sentinel was signalling that the duty to enlist now extended to married men as well as single men.

Putting pressure on married men to enlist peaked in April of 1918, when the Department of Militia attempted, one final time, to maintain the numbers of the Regiment through voluntary enlistment.⁵²⁴ Shortly after Governor Charles Alexander Harris announced the final recruiting drive, he made an appeal to the men of rural Newfoundland. Harris told the Dominion that God had allowed a nation of criminals to wreak havoc on the civilized world. Harris said that the people of Newfoundland had a divine responsibility to “go out and save humanity from destruction.”⁵²⁵ He then reminded married men that by fighting the Germans they would be defending “your wives, your children, your cottages, your boats.”⁵²⁶ By connecting his message of a higher, divine purpose, with the gendered expectations of men to act as protectors for their families, Harris told the men of Newfoundland that even married men had a responsibility to enlist.

The *Daily News* made the argument that men’s primary responsibility was no longer to their families but to the state in a May 1918 editorial. John Currie acknowledged that prior to the war, men had a strong responsibility to provide for their families. Despite this,

⁵²³ “Our Duty to the Newfoundland Regiment,” *Evening Telegram*, 31 October 1917.

⁵²⁴ “Big Recruiting Campaign Inaugurated,” *Evening Advocate*, 4 April 1918.

⁵²⁵ “An Appeal to the People of the Outports,” *Western Star*, 10 April 1917.

⁵²⁶ “An Appeal to the People of the Outports,” *Western Star*, 10 April 1917.

the conditions of the war were such a threat that a man's primary duty was not to care for their family but to defend the state:

Young men from 19 to 25 are rarely the arbiters of their own destinies. Thousands of our lads have been long anxious to play a man's part in the great tragedy of the centuries, but circumstances have proved too strong for their resistance. Honour thy father and mother is a commandment hoary with antiquity and many of the morrow's conscripts have long and thoughtfully weighed their parent's wishes against their own. They have been volunteers in intention if not in act. The State remained silent and the claims of the Home came first. Now the state is no longer silent. Motherland takes precedence to Mothers and the voice of the people speaks more insistently than the voice of the parent.⁵²⁷

In this article, Currie laid out the argument that the war had changed the relationship between citizens and the state, requiring men to put their country before their families.

The recruiting campaign during the First World War caused profound renegotiations of masculinity in Newfoundland. In the year before the war, people believed that a man's primary responsibility was to provide for his family. Initially, recruiters focused their efforts entirely on single men, as recruiters preached that only unmarried men had a duty to serve their country and defend the empire. This changed as recruiting rates decreased and recruiters began to target married men as well. In doing so, these recruiters told men that their primary masculine duty was no longer to provide for their families but to defend the state. In a reciprocal agreement, the government eventually shouldered the burden of providing for families so Newfoundland's men could fulfill what society told them was their true masculine potential by fighting and dying in the trenches.

"You'd look better carrying a gun"

⁵²⁷ "State Volunteers," *Daily News*, 21 May 1918.

In addition to shifting the societal importance from men's ability to provide for their families to their ability to defend the empire, many recruiters in Newfoundland portrayed military service as the defining element of masculinity. This portrayal was a radical shift in how society constructed gender in Newfoundland. Prior to the war, there was little opportunity for men to serve in anything other than a quasi-military cadet corp. Despite this, by the end of the war the notion that military service was a fundamental aspect of masculinity was so widespread that many believed that those who did not enlist did not deserve to be called men.

At the beginning of the war, recruiters used the supposed militaristic culture of Germany to show the superiority of British liberal freedom over German autocratic militarism. At a Patriotic Meeting in Catalina, in 1914, A.B. Morine, M.H.A. for Bonavista Bay, gave a speech that highlighted why Britain had to defeat German militarism. He said:

Under no flag in the world can the blessings be enjoyed which we possess in the British Empire. In Germany the people's representatives exercise little power, which is the special privilege of the aristocrat and the soldier. The Government is responsible to the Kaiser only, not to the electors. The latter no more govern the country than cattle control a farm. Free speech and free criticism are impossible. The most casual reference to the Kaiser means imprisonment. A sharp retort to an official or rudely worded letter brings pains and penalties at once upon their author. Taxation is most oppressive. Every male subject must serve as a soldier and the soldier insolently swaggers over the civilian. The flat of a sword is the usual, and the sharp edge of it not the unusual manner in which a soldier in uniform treats any civilian who does not humbly acknowledge by word and by deed his superiority.⁵²⁸

Morine's speech represents a common theme in early war discourse that warned that militarism had corrupted German freedom and was now threatening to corrupt the world.

⁵²⁸ "Shall Newfoundland Fall from Her Honorable Estate?" *Mail and Advocate*, 16 November 1914.

Another expression of anti-militarism in Newfoundland came in response to William Coaker's initial opposition to the formation of a Newfoundland Regiment. The leader of the FPU felt that a distinct Newfoundland Regiment was an expense that the Dominion could not bear. Instead, Coaker advocated that it would be much more affordable for the government to focus on recruiting sailors for the NRNR while encouraging those who wanted to serve in land forces to enlist with the Canadian or British Expeditionary Force.⁵²⁹

The reaction to Coaker's suggestion was profoundly negative. The editor of the *Twillingate Sun* condemned Coaker, reminding him that if he was living in Germany, his paper would have been burned, his printing press destroyed, and he would have been thrown in jail for publishing material against the state.⁵³⁰ Instead, the editor recommended that Coaker use his paper to defend the Country that allowed him to have free speech. While the editor of the *Twillingate Sun* despised Coaker's comments about the Newfoundland Regiment, he rather ironically suggested that Coaker keep his mouth closed and support the military that was defending his right to free speech against a militaristic autocracy.

In the early stages of the war, some recruiters abhorred cultural militarism. As the war raged on, they changed their tune and began to argue that military service was the essence of masculinity and that soldiers were superior to civilians. The editor of the *Daily News* was one of the first recruiters in Newfoundland to make this argument. In January of 1915, he wrote: "It is not the hoodlum, the corner boy or the wastrel that has enlisted, but

⁵²⁹ Sean Cadigan, *Death on Two Fronts*, 60.

⁵³⁰ "The War from Our Point of View," *Twillingate Sun*, 22 August 1914.

the man of honour, of substance, the thoughtful man, the man of business, of knowledge, and of religion. The best elements have answered the call, men from the churches, the universities, the colleges, the shops, the factories, and farms.⁵³¹” The editor began this article by pointing out that the best elements of society are coming forward to enlist. He stops short of saying that those who do not enlist are not truly men. Towards the end of the article, however, the editor attacked those who failed to come forward:

Unfortunately, there is a class of *creatures, who masquerade as men*, in all countries. They exude patriotism and are tremendously bellicose at a safe distance from the enemy, but their bravery evaporates with their beer, their fearlessness with their fags, and their loyalty with their liquor. These men do not do their duty because they are ignorant of the meaning of the word. They shout lustily “Britons never, never, shall be slaves” and abuse their liberty at the expense of those who are maintaining it.⁵³²

In this article, the *Daily News* sent two messages. Firstly, Currie told his readers that those who came forward to volunteer were the very best men in the country and were worthy of praise. Secondly, he attacked the “slackers” who refused to enlist by denying their masculinity and their humanity.

Soldiers also spread the idea that military service was the pinnacle of masculinity. In October 1915, Cpl Hayward Hussey of Bunyan’s Cove wrote a letter home to his parents. Hussey updated his mother on his situation and expressed frustration that, as an 18-year-old, the Regiment would not allow him to serve in the frontlines because he was eager to participate in a bayonet charge. He also told his mother that more men would be needed to replace the casualties from Gallipoli. He asked her to encourage his friend Louis

⁵³¹ “The Slackers,” *Daily News*, 4 January 1915.

⁵³² “The Slackers,” *Daily News*, 4 January 1915.

to enlist because “a man is nothing [until] he is in soldier or sailor clothes.”⁵³³ Furthermore, Hussey expressed disappointment that more men did not enlist from his community. The *Mail and Advocate* published this letter in November. Hussey’s age, his enthusiasm, and his call for all true men to enlist would have provided a powerful message to the readers of the *Advocate*, that society defined men by their military service and those in uniform were less than masculine.

The link between masculinity and military service became so strong that some citizens argued that the state should deny the rights of male citizens to men who were not willing to perform military service. In September 1917, the *Daily News* ran an article titled “Conscientious Objectors.” In this article, the Currie said that the government should strip the citizenship of men who refuse to serve in the military, transfer their voting rights to the mothers and wives of soldiers. Describing those who refused to enlist, the editor of the *Daily News* said:

...such are unworthy of the rights not only of citizenship, but of citizenship itself. Their word is as valueless as a Hunnish pledge, and what more hollow than that?... It is inconceivable to a virile mind that there are in the world men who are content to allow their loved ones to become prey to the infamies and the lusts of an unspeakable foe, rather than strike a blow for their safety and for the liberties that their sires have won. But if there are, is it reasonable that he who is unwilling to defend his motherland, and those whom has sworn to protect, should he be accorded the rights of a real man?⁵³⁴

In the eyes of the *Daily News*, a defining element of masculinity was the responsibility to defend your family and your country. By refusing to fight, the editor was arguing that these

⁵³³ “Has the Right Spirit,” *Mail and Advocate*, 16 November 1915.

⁵³⁴ “Conscientious Objectors,” *Daily News*, 15 September 1917.

were not “real” men and they did not deserve the status and rights of an individual in a liberal democracy.

Lois Bibbings’ work on conscientious objectors (COs) in Britain demonstrates that Newfoundlanders responded to “shirkers” in very similar ways to their British counterparts. Bibbings shows that in Britain, the public largely perceived COs as unmanly or effeminate.” She explains that during the war, the volunteer soldier became the epitome of masculinity and virtue. In comparison, COs were often ridiculed as unmasculine parasites who lived comfortably while the real men sacrificed their lives. By refusing to realize their masculine duty, to serve in the military, Bibbings argues that in the eyes of many Britons, COs emasculated themselves, making themselves “unmen.”⁵³⁵

Like their counterparts in Britain, some recruiters argued that men who refused to fight were more than unmanly, they were effeminate. In an anonymous article written for the *Western Star* in October 1917, the author implored the men of Bay St. George to enlist following the close of a successful fishery. He said that fishermen had amply provided for the women and children of Bay St. George and men no longer had any excuse for not enlisting. He further declared that anyone who refused to enlist was avoiding doing their duty. In a scathing attack on men who had not enlisted the author wrote: “If, however, you are afraid of being killed, or of getting lost, or getting your feet wet even, why then stay right ‘behind the hills’ but for goodness sake do something. Why not buy some woolen yarn and knitting needles and get your mummies to show you how to knit socks and mitts for the MEN who are at the front fighting your battles?”⁵³⁶

⁵³⁵ Bibbings, *Telling Tales About Men*, 96-104.

⁵³⁶ “Many Kinds of Slackers,” *Western Star*, 3 October 1917.

In 1917, when news reached Newfoundland that the British Army was considering removing the Newfoundland Regiment from frontline duties, recruiting efforts that focused on the gendered expectation of military service for male citizens accelerated. In a desperate plea to the people of Newfoundland, J.R. Bennett published an appeal in every major newspaper on the island. He implored every military aged men to “Do your duty now; play the man’s part, and never let it be thrown in your faces or the faces of your children, that you failed in your duty to your Country in her hour of greatest trial.” Not convinced that the an appeal from the government would convince men to enlist, Bennett also appealed to the parents, siblings, and spouses of military aged men to help young men realize what was expected of their gender and to acquit themselves like men.⁵³⁷

In response to this appeal, a columnist for the *Evening Telegram*, writing under the pseudonym Sentinel, attacked fishermen for their failure to enlist. Sentinel said that rural fishermen were not living up to their masculine duties and stated that every able-bodied man who remained at home and allowed real men to do his fighting was not a man but “a male inhabitant of Newfoundland.” Because the men of rural Newfoundland were failing to live up to their masculine expectations, Sentinel argued that the government ought to enact conscription to force men to live up to the duties of their gender.⁵³⁸

Another example of gender shaming for men who did not enlist appeared in an article in the *Evening Advocate* on 10 November 1917. This article started with the statement: “Men! Men of Newfoundland! If you are not a man, don’t read this! This is for the attention of men, real men!” In this article, columnist Avalond discussed what he

⁵³⁷ “An Appeal to the People of Newfoundland,” *Evening Advocate*, 12 October 1917.

⁵³⁸ “Our Duty to the Regiment,” *Evening Telegram*, 31 October 1917.

believed it means to be a man. He said: “What is a man? Is the person who goes on day by day, week by week, month by month, in this everyday drudgery – get up in the morning – go down to work – come home to dinner – bolt back to work again – tea – nickel – bed – a man? God forbid!”⁵³⁹ This description of an unmanly life is an excellent example of the impact the war had on masculinity. Prior to the war, the majority of Newfoundlanders would have lived a domestic life very similar to the one described by Avalond. During the war, however, Avalond argued that such domestic life was not fit for a true man.

Avalond continued his lesson on masculinity by asking: “Is he who can listen unstirred, unmoved, indifferently to the calls, pleadings from the brave lads – MEN! – out in the trenches, cold, dismal, shot-wrecked trenches – who can read of the glorious, undying acts of valour, of bravery, unequaled in the whole history of the world without growing cold down the spine – is he – a MAN? God forbid!” Following his argument that a domestic life was unmanly, Avalond followed with this statement, which argued that no real man would hear the call for military service and ignore it. Between these two statements, he makes it clear that, in his mind, nobody can claim to be a man if they have not performed military service during the war.⁵⁴⁰

Not only did recruiters deny the masculinity of those who refused to enlist, they also shamed these men. Harold Mitchell, the leader of the Returned Soldier and Rejected Volunteer Association, published an appeal for men to enlist with the Newfoundland Regiment. He argued that the British Empire had done so much for each and every citizen that men owed their service, and potentially their lives, to defend the Empire. He

⁵³⁹ “MEN!” *Evening Advocate*, 10 November 1917.

⁵⁴⁰ “MEN!” *Evening Advocate*, 10 November 1917.

announced that he would rather die in France than live in a country whose manhood was so degraded that its men cared more about the price of fish than the fate of the British Empire.⁵⁴¹

Several recruiting posters also attempted to bring shame upon men who refused to enlist. One poster, titled “Men more Men,” depicts a well-dressed man removing his hat while speaking to a woman in the foreground. In the background was a group of men in uniform, marching and carrying rifles. In the caption of the poster, the man says to the woman “May I carry your grip?” To which she responds, “You’d look better carrying a gun.”⁵⁴² On one level, this poster is an overt attempt at shaming civilian men by suggest that women will not be romantically interested in men who were not in uniform.

However, if the reader looks closely at the man, they will notice that his posture matches the woman’s posture and he is wearing a pair of high heels similar to the woman in the photo. By dressing the young suitor in women’s clothing the author of the cartoon was not only suggesting that women would not find civilians attractive but also effeminate.

Another prominent example of a poster designed to shame men into enlisting appeared on the front page of the *Evening Telegram*. The Newfoundland Regiment



Figure 1: *Mail and Advocate*, 5 October 1916

⁵⁴¹ “An Appeal,” *Evening Advocate*, 15 April 1918.

⁵⁴² “Men More Men,” *Mail and Advocate*, 5 October 1916.

designed this advertisement and the space was paid for by Bowring Brothers Ltd.

Containing only text the poster read “Are Your Folks Ashamed of You for Not



Figure 2: *Evening Telegram*, 2 May 1918

enlisting?”⁵⁴³ This poster was a simple but effective suggestion that by not enlisting, men were bringing shame to their entire families.

Recruiters also used poetry to shame men into enlisting. On 13 April 1916, the *Mail and Advocate* published a poem titled “The Song of the Shirker” by W. Ferrans:

When the war broke out, my
 chum he would go,
 And join the Army, but I said
 “No!”
 In the list of the slain when his
 name I did see
 I shivered, and said, it might have
 been me
 If I had been as foolish as he
 Another I knew has lost a limb,
 Oh, horror, to be the same as him
 The Germans may win and come
 over for me
 Its grand to live in this land of
 the free

‘Tis dinned in my ears night, noon
 And morn
 To go, but to do so I steadily
 scorn,
 You’ll never see me in the Barrack
 Square
 There’s not much ease or pleasure
 There

⁵⁴³ “Are Your Folks Ashamed of You For Not Enlisting?” *Evening Telegram*, 2 May 1918.

To make more money I eagerly
 Try
 “Business as usual” I loudly cry,
 Why, Why should I go from my
 father’s farm
 Where I am safe and quite free
 from harm?
 And prices are good, so happy are
 we
 ‘Tis grand to live in the land of
 the free

Recruiting meetings, I never
 attend
 Some other way my time I spend
 From the march of the men and
 the roll of the drum
 I walk in byways or slink away
 home
 I’ve Father and Mother, and Brothers
 Three
 Don’t bring in compulsion with
 That I agree,
 Tis grand to live in the land of
 the free

Liberty’s tree I love you from leaf
 to root
 Oh, why do you bear such rotten
 fruit?
 Cowards they are, and traitors
 they be
 To this land of the brave, our land
 Of the free⁵⁴⁴

This poem shamed shirkers in several different ways. It described conscientious objectors as feckless cowards, who did not care about soldiers suffering overseas and were ignorant to the threat posed by Germany. The poem also portrayed shirkers as greedy hedonists.

⁵⁴⁴ “The Song of the Shirker,” *Mail and Advocate*, 13 April 1916.

However, perhaps the most scathing indictment of men who refused to enlist comes in the final stanza when Ferrans changes from the perspective of the shirker to speaking from his perspective. Not only does he refer to these men as “rotten fruit” but he also calls them traitors. In referring to conscientious objectors as “rotten fruit,” Ferrans is showing just how powerful the wartime connection was between masculinity and military service by suggesting that men who refused to serve were somehow defective.

The theme of portraying conscientious objectors as traitors occurred throughout the British Empire. In *Telling Tales About Men: Conceptions of Conscientious Objectors to Military Service During the First World War*, Lois Bibbings argued that in addition to being called pathetic, unmanly, and deviant, those who refused to serve in the military were also labelled as dangerous traitors. Depictions of conscientious objectors as dangerous often claimed that shirkers destabilized, undermined, and damaged the war effort. Those who characterized the un-enlisted as dangerous did so because their opposition to military service undermined the conceptions of gender and citizenship that underpinned the recruiting efforts that fueled the war.⁵⁴⁵

While Ferran’s *Song of the Shirker*, portrayed civilian men as cowardly, pathetic, weak, and dangerous, other poems warned that an everlasting shame would befall any man who refused to enlist. On 3 May 1918, the *Evening Advocate* published “A Picture of a Slacker in Twenty Years,” by an author known only as “Newfoundlander:”

A man sits by a big log fire,
A fine looking man in evening attire
Dinner is over, ‘twas quite a success –
His wife sits opposite in evening dress.
A voice from the stair-top reaches his ear,

⁵⁴⁵ Bibbings, *Telling Tales About Men*, 141.

“May I come in Daddy? I’m here.”
 Why, yes! My boy, come along right in,
 would we keep you out? ‘twould be a sin.
 Son in runs a darling of seven, I’d say
 A golden head laddie with eyes of grey.
 He looks at his father and says, “Dad, say
 Won’t you tell me a story to finish the day?”
 And of what shall I tell my little man?
 A fairy tale from old friend Hann,
 Or of Goblins or Orphan Ann;
 Or again the Three Bears or Red Riding Hood,
 Or of some little boy who was very good?
 “No, Dad, no, no more of that,
 I want the kind that Jimmie Mack
 Told me to-day, his father told
 Of when he was young and a soldier bold.
 “Oh! Dad it was great, how he went away
 To fight the foe and save the day.
 He sailed away on the ocean blue.
 And Jimmie says - ‘tis every bit true.
 So I want to hear all about you,
 For you were brave and noble and true
 I know you were one of the first to go
 I told Jim Mack, he said t’aint so.
 Your Dad said, HE WOULD NEVER GO
 I said to Jimmie, “I’ll fight you soon
 For saying my Daddy didn’t shoulder a gun.”
 And you did, said his father full of pride,
 Well, - no – said the boy I only cried
 The boys always hurt me when they give me a blow
 And I fear being hurt, Dad you know.
 Mother, take the boy away
 What can I say to him, what can I say?
 I cannot answer my boy to-day
 Take him away, Mother take him away
 I stayed back at the bugles call,
 I stayed back for fear I would fall
 I stayed back afraid to go with Jim Mack’s Dad
 To fight the foe.
 And now my son must suffer instead
 For the sons of his Father are on his head
 Better, I’d gone and been found dead
 Then stayed at home and have been wed
 And give to the world a coward instead

Which will it be, boys?
 Which will it be, when the war is over and done,
 Will you be Jim Mack's dad, or will you be me?
 When you talk to your little son.⁵⁴⁶

This poem was an attack on both non-enlisted men's masculinity and on their ability to raise children. In this poem, Newfoundlanders not only accused the father of being a coward, but he implied that any man who did not serve would pass his cowardice on to his children. The father in this poem was proud that his son told him that he was going to fight Jimmie Mack, however, his son dashed his hopes when he told his father that he only cried and was afraid of being hurt. By suggesting that the non-enlisted men would not pass down traditionally masculine qualities of bravery, stoicism, and violence, Newfoundlanders were implying that these men would leave an eternal black mark on their families for their failure to do their manly duty.⁵⁴⁷

Wartime employment was another pervasive aspect of gender shaming faced by non-enlisted men. By 1915, many in Newfoundland believed that soldiering was the only masculine work in wartime. In June 1915, the editor of the *Mail and Advocate*, lamented that there were thousands of young men in the British Empire who were staying at home and doing "women's work" in jobs that could be filled by older men or by women.⁵⁴⁸ Initially, those who were attacked for doing "women's work" held positions in the civil

⁵⁴⁶ "A Picture of a Slacker in Twenty Years," *Evening Advocate*, 3 May 1918.

⁵⁴⁷ This poem is very similar to a widespread recruiting poster released by Parliamentary Recruiting Committee of the United Kingdom titled "Daddy What Did You Do During the Great War?" In this poster, a child is sitting on her father's lap, asking what he did during the war. The father has no response other than a concerned look on his face. This poster too suggests that men who refused to serve would be shamed for the rest of their lives. "Daddy What Did You Do During The Great War," *Imperial War Museum*, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/17053>, retrieved 7 January 2020.

⁵⁴⁸ "A Contrast," *Mail and Advocate*, 7 June 1915.

service, as telegraph operators, shopkeepers, etc. However, as the war progressed, fisherman, the occupation of the vast majority of men in Newfoundland, were attacked.

The *Evening Advocate* published a clear example of employment-based shaming on 30 November 1917 in a poem titled “The Man Who Won’t” by Frederick H. Bailey:

Don’t you feel a little lonesome when you talk the “city” street,
 And read the signs that’s really meant for you;
 Don’t you feel a little shameful when at every step you meet
 A lad that’s dressed in khaki eyeing you.
 Have you chosen to ignore them?
 Have you stopped to count the cost?
 In future years you’ll figure up the toil,
 You have earned the name of slacker, and the chance that you have lost
 Will mark the desolation of your soul.

Don’t you think ‘twill be forgotten, no matter where you are,
 The question to be answered first of all
 Will be “what was the battalion that you served with at the war?”
 Can you tell them that you never hear the call?
 Why there’s some men who are longing to take that trip to France.
 But are hampered, age or sickness foil the plan,
 I can bring them by the dozen, who’ll go with you on chance
 If ‘tis only just to help you play the man

You’re at work in store or office, there are girls to do your job,
 Another pay-roll’s waiting for you name.
 There are comrades looking for you, there are medals for your fob,
 There are honour that are waiting for your claim.
 If it’s dying that you are scared of, well you have to die someday.
 You’re bound to live through your allotted span.
 And if old “Death” should claim you, could you find a better way
 Than meeting him a “Soldier and a Man?”

You’ll be first to do the shouting at the finish of the war
 You’ll be standing mid the women with a flag;
 You’ll be cheering for the Empire as you’ve never cheered before
 And forget that days your knees were on the sag,
 Then you’ll go back to the office, the workshop or the store,
 To find your paycheque waiting with the “can.”
 The smiling boss will tell you “You’re not wanted anymore.”

The job you held is handed to a man.⁵⁴⁹

Bailey's poem was typical of narratives that criticized men who stayed at home to work, instead of serving with the military. These narratives argued that jobs once held primarily by men were no longer masculine. By this logic, recruiters argued that men working in civilian jobs were effeminate. The final two lines of Bailey's poem highlighted the perceived effeminacy of civilian employment by suggesting that a civilian's employers would fire them at the end of the war and hire "real" men who served overseas.

No Berths for Slackers

In addition to labelling the un-enlisted as effeminate, many soldiers expressed anger at those who stayed at home, making money, while they fought overseas. As a result of this tension between soldiers and civilians, many men argued that businesses should not hire young able-bodied men who did not volunteer for service. Many members of the Newfoundland Patriotic Association held this position. On 9 December W.B. Grieve, manager of the Baine, Johnston & Co and Secretary of the NPA, requested that the government force all single, military aged men, currently employed by the government, to offer themselves for enlistment or resign their positions. The Colonial Secretary was not pleased with the NPA's attempted interference in government matters and eventually forced Grieve to withdraw his request and apologize.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁹ "The Man Who Won't," *Evening Advocate*, 30 November 1917.

⁵⁵⁰ W.B. Grieve, Secretary of Recruiting Committee to J.R. Bennett, Colonial Secretary, 16 Dec 1916, PANL, GN 2.14.275

While Grieve's scheme failed, other efforts to deny employment opportunities to the non-enlisted were more successful. In February 1916, the vast majority of sealing vessel owners refused to hire any single man under the age of thirty who had not offered himself up for service. These ship owners vowed to give preference to those who had not "shirked his responsibility or failed his duty to his country." While this caused hardship for young men who relied on the seal fishery as a form of seasonal employment, the editor of the *Daily News* encouraged other businesses to follow the lead of the sealing fleet. Currie cautioned that "a young man who fails to measure up to the duties of citizenship and lends an unheeding ear to the call of his country, is not at all unlikely prove a shirker in other things. And the business world of to-day has no room for the slacker."⁵⁵¹ By warning that the non-enlisted would make poor employees, the *Daily News* went beyond Grieve's call to get young men to enlist and suggested that there must be a character flaw for young men who refused to fight.

Several recruiting posters also attempted to discourage employers from hiring unenlisted men. Some of these contained veiled threats that young men who refused to enlist would lose their jobs. One example, from the *Evening Telegram*, informed men that their

⁵⁵¹ "No Berths for Slackers," *Daily News*, 17 February 1916.

“chums” had given up their lucrative jobs to enlist and asked, “Does your employer know why you haven’t offered?” This was a veiled threat that men would lose their jobs if their employers found out their reasons for not enlisting.⁵⁵²

Other advertisements were much more direct. One ad, paid for by the Returned Soldiers and Rejected Volunteer Association, warned employers to hire unmarried military aged men “at their own risk.”⁵⁵³ This advertisement declared that the patriotic business owner would neither hire men who were eligible for military service nor do business with any other company who hired these men. These calls to patriotism were particularly effective during the war as the language of patriotism have pervaded Newfoundland society and accusations of unpatriotic behaviour often carried serious consequences.

It is clear that calls for companies to refuse to hire non-enlisted men were effective and some men had trouble finding work. In May of 1916, Alfred George, a resident of Trinity Bay, moved to Grand Falls in order to find work in the paper mill. Upon arriving there, a manager at the mill

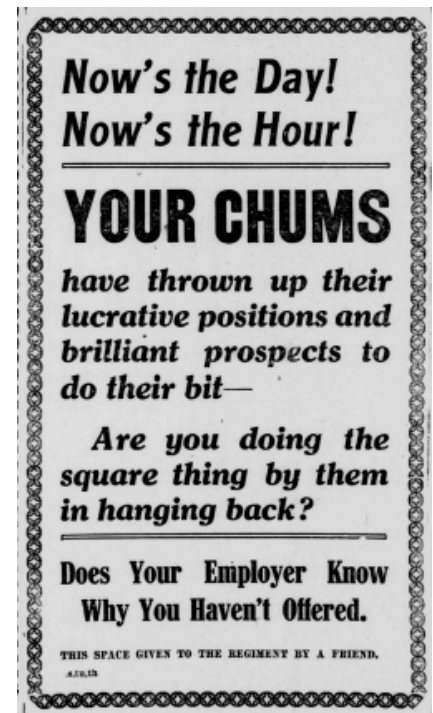


Figure 3: *Evening Telegram*, 23 April 1918

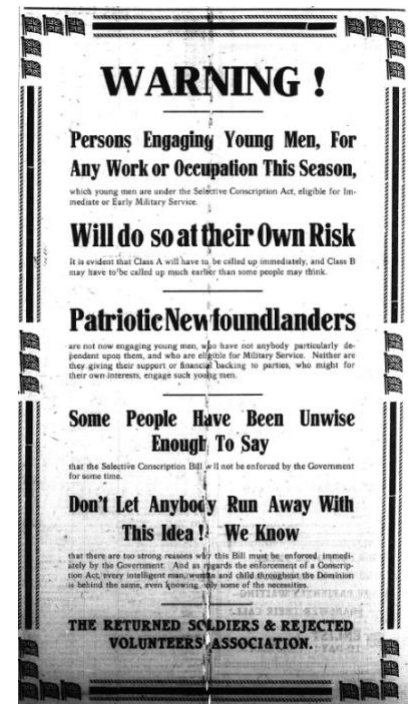


Figure 4: *Evening Advocate*, 3 May 1918.

⁵⁵² “Now’s the Day!” *Evening Telegram*, 23 April 1918

⁵⁵³ “Warning!” *Evening Advocate*, 3 May 1918.

informed George that he would not offer him a job unless he could prove that he attempted to enlist in either the Newfoundland Regiment or the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve. George had offered his services to the Newfoundland Regiment, but he failed his medical examination because he was underweight. Despite this, when the Regiment turned him away, they did not provide him with proof that he attempted to enlist. In order to obtain proof of his rejected volunteer status, George wrote to the Colonial Secretary, who obtained a letter from the Adjutant of the Regiment stating that George had volunteered his services but failed the medical examination.⁵⁵⁴

The issue of the employment of non-enlisted men was so controversial because many believed these men were shirking their duties in order to take advantage of the wartime economy. This was true for rural fishermen who recruiters accused of refusing to enlist because they could make more money by staying at home. The *Evening Telegram* addressed this issue in a scathing editorial titled “To the Fishermen of Newfoundland.” In this article, the editor addressed fishermen directly, saying that the men of St. John’s had done their duty but rural Newfoundlanders had not. The editor also shamed these men and accused them of profiteering off the misery of those who were suffering because of the war:

But you have not only caught the fish, you have sold it. Have you ever made so much actual cold hard cash before? You know you have not. Has it occurred to you to ask why this has been? Perhaps it has; perhaps you know in a vague sort of way. We will try to tell you a little more exactly. Fish has cost more to those who buy it because there has been a great scarcity of it. That is the main reason, almost the whole reason. There has also been a great scarcity of food in general the world over. What is the meaning of that? It is what we have stated above, that thousands of human being are dying for want of it, many of them helpless women and children, emaciated mothers and pitiful shrunken babies. Do you see the connection? It is

⁵⁵⁴ J.R. Bennett to Mr. Alfred George, 10 May 1916, PANL, 2.14.90.

this misery that has helped to make your calling so profitable, directly in some cases, indirectly in all the rest. Think of it, when you count over your money or reckon up your bank account. If you have more to count, a larger figure to reckon, than in years past, ponder a little the reason why.⁵⁵⁵

Through his use of inflammatory language, the editor of the *Evening Telegram* accused Newfoundland fishermen of profiteering off the misery caused by the war. The editor's argument was hypocritical. On the one hand he admitted that the world had a serious shortage of food and people were dying from starvation. However, in the same breath the editor shamed fishermen for catching fish which, in a small way, would help alleviate the global food shortage. This shows that the wartime rhetoric was so powerful it could even overcome common sense.

Following this section, the editor explained that the only true way for Newfoundlanders to help win the war was to enlist and fight:

There is only one way to remove [the horrible conditions of the war]. This war is the enemy of mankind and mankind must fight it to a finish. There is only one way to fight it to a finish and that is to fight to a finish those who made it for their own damnable ends. It is not Germany and Austria that the Allies – not the Allies either, but the rest of the world – are fighting, it is the works of darkness. If every man had realised this at first who realises it now, there would now be no war. Europe would be a clean and wholesome place, not the living hell it is. But it is being purged more quickly than most think. Will YOU help to purge it or stand aloof? Will you help the cause of freedom or its enemies?⁵⁵⁶

In this statement, the editor of the *Evening Telegram* told fishermen that they only had one responsibility during the war: to fight. Any other action, including fishing, was not only shirking their duty as men but was also aiding the enemy and made them complicit in the suffering of millions in Europe. Lieutenant Cyril Carter, a soldier who was injured in

⁵⁵⁵ "To the Fishermen of Newfoundland," *Evening Telegram*, 30 October 1917.

⁵⁵⁶ "To the Fishermen of Newfoundland," *Evening Telegram*, 30 October 1917.

Gallipoli, expressed this same sentiment at a recruiting meeting in 1916 when he told a large audience that fishermen who did not enlist were “nothing less than accessories to murder.”⁵⁵⁷

In the House of Assembly, William Coaker expressed concern about the impact of non-enlisted employment on recruiting efforts. Speaking in the House Assembly, in 1916, Coaker expressed his belief that voluntary recruitment was unfair. He pointed out that some young men were fighting and living in the trenches, others keeping watch on ships defending the empire, while still others “stay behind, enjoying what our soldiers and sailors are preserving for us, and laughing at them for their pains.”⁵⁵⁸ Coaker expressed a common concern among recruiters in Newfoundland: men who refused to enlist would stay at home, earn healthy profits from the fishery, and discourage other young men from enlisting. Recruiters believed by refusing to enlist, non-enlisted men not only discouraged other men from enlisting, but they weakened the narrative that the only acceptable form of male labour was military service.⁵⁵⁹

“Regenerate the Most Useless Elements of the Nation”

The final theme in the gendered language of recruiting was that military service could have a redemptive, healing quality for the nation and for individual men. In the early twentieth century, many British newspapers espoused the supposed purifying and cleansing

⁵⁵⁷ “Last Night’s Open-Air Recruiting Meeting a Great Success,” *Evening Telegram*, 8 November 1916.

⁵⁵⁸ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 27 March 1916.

⁵⁵⁹ “Manhood!” *Evening Advocate*, 16 November 1917.

nature of warfare and military service. This notion was rooted in contemporary Social Darwinist ideas that warfare was the ultimate test for a nation and its people. Glenn Wilkinson argues that Edwardian Britons believed not only that war could revitalize a decaying Britain but also that war could rejuvenate Britain's withering masculinity. According to Wilkinson, warfare held such an important element in Edwardian masculinity because it created the ideal separation between the gender identities as many British men believed that warfare was as natural for men as childbirth was for women. Wilkinson shows that many men believed that warfare alone could revitalize "a generation of 'degenerate' unmanly males who were either unable, or worse, unwilling to defend the honour of their country, due to a loss of masculine martial spirit."⁵⁶⁰

Prior to the war, with very few opportunities to perform military service, soldiering did not hold the same importance to male gender identity in the Dominion of Newfoundland as it did in the British Isles. As the Dominion's recruiting campaign began to falter, recruiters highlighted what they considered to be the benefits of military service on the individual and the nation. In an article from February 1915, John Robinson, argued that soldiers were prime examples of masculinity and referred to the non-enlisted as "creatures who masquerade men."⁵⁶¹ Robinson said military service could be a benefit to both the nation and to the effeminate men who refuse to enlist:

It would be a national benefit, and a blessing to the slackers themselves, if the old methods were temporarily revived, and they were compelled to serve. A few month's training would make men out of them; and regenerate the most useless

⁵⁶⁰ Glenn Wilkinson, "The Blessings of War: Depictions of Military Force in Edwardian Newspapers," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 1 (1998), 99.

⁵⁶¹ "The Slackers," *Daily News*, 4 January 1915. J.A. Robinson, the owner of the *Daily News*, acted as the editor of the newspaper from 1906 until 1916. In 1916, Robinson remained the owner of the newspaper while John Currie took over editorial control.

elements of the nation. Military or Naval discipline would, in their cases, be permanently reformatory; and though the gin-palace graduate would be poor material to mix with our splendid volunteer soldiery, even the drunkard, the hooligan, and the wastrel may be changed by discipline into men.⁵⁶²

In this article, Robinson made a very clear argument that Newfoundland's participation in the war could not only be beneficial for the Dominion's citizen-soldiers, but it would also benefit the nation by turning the unmanly into archetypes of masculinity who would uphold the values of the nation.

H.A. Winter, also expressed similar sentiments in an article published in the *Evening Telegram* on 8 November 1916. In this article, Winter encouraged recruiters to do more than just remind men of the "abstract principles of duty and honour." While he admitted honour and duty were the first and primary consideration for recruiting, he also implored recruiters to emphasize the benefits and privileges that accompanied the fulfillment of a citizen's duties. Highlighting what he considered to be one of the benefits of military service he wrote:

...we are among those who see in the splendid experiences of so many Newfoundlanders and in their return to their native land with broadened vision and priceless knowledge gained in the best of schools one of the most valuable factors in the progress of the country that could be imagined.⁵⁶³

While Winter was somewhat vague on what educational experiences he believed soldiers had while overseas, it is clear that he was trying to convince potential recruits that military service could be a transformative experience.

Some recruiters advocated that a righteous war not only had a transformative impact on men but also on the nation as a whole. Speaking before the House of Assembly, W.F.

⁵⁶² "The Slackers," *Daily News*, 4 January 1915.

⁵⁶³ "Last Night's Recruiting," *Evening Telegram*, 8 November 1916.

Lloyd argued that war had shaped the most influential nations throughout European history such as Greece, Spain, France. He argued that these countries were forged in battle and flourished not only in democracy but also in the arts, literature, commerce, and science.⁵⁶⁴ According to Lloyd, the benefits of the war extended not only to soldiers but to every citizen in the nation. He believed that the positive impact of wars was so great on societies that the Great War would lead to a revolution in arts and literature; science and technology in the British Empire. By comparing Newfoundland's war effort to examples from European history, Lloyd implied that the Dominion's participation in the First World War might lead to an explosion of development in Newfoundland, sending them down the path of influential European powers.

"Or Perhaps We Should Say Colonials"

In addition to rearranging conceptions of masculinity, Newfoundland's recruiting campaign also altered conceptions of ethnicity as many people re-evaluated their beliefs about what it meant to be a citizen in a British Dominion, and what it meant to be British. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries many people believed that there were two groups of people living in the Colonies: Britishers and Colonials. Britishers lived up to British ideals of class, ethnicity, and gender, while colonials did not. Although the people of Newfoundland had long considered the colony a loyal cornerstone that made the Empire possible, Newfoundland's weak economic position and dependence on the fishery meant

⁵⁶⁴ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 30 May 1917.

that many Newfoundlanders struggled to justify the place they believed they held within the British Empire.⁵⁶⁵

Kurt Korneski has argued that that the campaign for railway development was spurred on by a belief that a railway would bring Newfoundland closer to British ideals of gender, ethnicity, and class. Railway promoters believed that a railway would help fishermen to break their dependence on merchants, while supporting British masculine ideals, which placed great importance on individualism and independence. Furthermore, railway promoters were also eager to point out that by 1880 every British Dominion and Colony had a railway with the exception of Newfoundland and China.⁵⁶⁶ By highlighting that both Newfoundland and China lacked railways and the differences between Newfoundland and other British Dominions, railway promoters were capitalizing on traditional British notions of race, class, and gender.

Like the railway, recruiters often described Newfoundland's war effort as an opportunity for Newfoundlanders to live up to British expectations of gender, ethnicity, and class. This was a profound change in the way Newfoundlanders thought about their ethnic identity. Prior to the war, Newfoundlanders believed that the Dominion was loyal bastion of the British Empire and they never considered military service to be a fundamental part of their place in the Empire. During the war, however, there was a radical shift in Newfoundland's understand of what it meant to be British and military service became the defining element of British ethnicity.

⁵⁶⁵ Hiller, James. "Robert Bond and the Pink, White, and Green: Newfoundland Nationalism in Perspective." *Acadiensis* 36, No. 2 (2007): 113-133.

⁵⁶⁶ Korneski, "Race, Gender, Class and Colonial Nationalism: Railway Development in Newfoundland, 1881-1898," 80.

Shortly after the outbreak of the war, recruiters began to argue that Newfoundlanders had to enlist to show that they deserved the title of Britisher. A.B Morine espoused this belief at a speech given to the Society of United Fishermen in St. John's. Morine told his audience that as Britons, the Empire charged them with the responsibilities and the privilege afforded to all Britishers. He told the audience that the free Briton would defend himself and to rely on others for defense was the badge of serfdom. Furthermore, Morine argued that Newfoundland had not done enough in the past to defend the empire, having contributed neither a dollar nor a man to the Royal Navy. He accused the people of consenting to be protected by the tax-payers of Britain while complaining when the Dominion was not offered a larger role in governing the Empire.⁵⁶⁷ In short, Morine believed Newfoundlanders were failing to live up to the title of Britisher because they were not willing to defend the British Empire.

In an article from June 1915, the editor of the *Mail and Advocate* highlighted the difference between Britishers and Colonials. John St. John said that, because of their contributions to the war effort, the rest of the British Empire should call Newfoundlanders Colonials and not Britishers. He observed that many people were quick to discuss the prowess and patriotism of Englishmen, while dismissing the supposedly "effete" Southern Europeans. Despite their outward patriotism, St. John argued that thousands of men in Newfoundland refused to enlist and stayed at home and doing women's work. In comparison, the editor praised the Italians for taking decisive action raising 10,000 troops in one day, banning public meetings, instituting rigorous censorship, and suppressing the

⁵⁶⁷ "Splendid Patriotic Rally Hears Eloquent Address," *Mail and Advocate*, 27 November 1914.

postal service.⁵⁶⁸ By referring to Newfoundlanders as “colonials” and comparing them to the Italians who were making far more sacrifices for the war effort, St. John intimated that Newfoundlanders had to be willing to support the war effort through higher enlistment rates and greater sacrifices of personal freedoms if they were to deserve the title of “Britisher.”

Shortly after the announcement that the NPA would raise a second battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, the editor of the *Evening Telegram* relied on tropes of Britishness to encourage men to enlist. W.F. Lloyd argued that the war against Germany was nothing short of a war of survival for the British Empire and everything it stood for. He said Newfoundland’s British forefathers had fought for liberty, freedom, and Christianity and the Kaiser would see all of that destroyed and replaced with “state force and frightfulness.”⁵⁶⁹ Lloyd told Newfoundlanders that the British blood in their veins would draw them to enlist:

We have to win out as our forefathers have done in the past. They fought against great odds. We are fighting against greater forces. If we are to win out we must make even greater sacrifices of blood than they made. If we are worthy of them, we shall do it. If we are degenerates, we must be the Kaiser’s slaves. Newfoundland is called upon to do her part. We are confident that Newfoundland will not fail. The sturdy blood of England, Ireland, Scotland is on our veins, which will be freely sacrificed they we remain free.⁵⁷⁰

By drawing on symbols from British ideals and history and by reminding people that British blood ran through their veins, the editor emphasized Newfoundland’s connection to Britain and reminded men of their British heritage.

⁵⁶⁸ “A Contrast,” *Mail and Advocate*, 6 June 1915.

⁵⁶⁹ “The New Battalion the Call of the Blood,” *Evening Telegram*, 8 February 1916.

⁵⁷⁰ “The New Battalion the Call of the Blood,” *Evening Telegram*, 8 February 1916.

An author, writing under the pseudonym “Public Opinion” made a similar argument, in February 1916, when he wrote a letter to the editor of the *Mail and Advocate* praising the government’s decision to raise and maintain a second battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment. Public Opinion told the editor that in order to raise the recruits needed for the second battalion, men must be reminded that they have the same rights, privileges of citizenship “as the Englishmen of London, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, or Lincolnshire; the Irishmen of Dublin, Cork, Kilkenny, Meath, and Belfast; the Scotchmen of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, and Inverness.”⁵⁷¹ Public Opinion also addressed English, Irish, and Scottish Newfoundlanders, the various “races” that made up the British Empire, describing of the proud heritage of each race. He concluded his article by highlighting the military prowess of the English, Irish, and Scottish saying: ‘No better combination than English, Irish, and Scotch can be found. They are loyal, patriotic, and enthusiastic and are ready at all times to lay down their lives in defence of Freedom and Liberty. The iron rod of oppression never aided or never will appeal to a true Briton.’⁵⁷²

Other editorials capitalized on shared British history to rally Newfoundlanders to the Union Jack. In a letter to the editor of the *Mail and Advocate*, J.W. Nichols tried to reassure Newfoundlanders that the superiority of the British Race meant that Britain could not lose the war. Nichols told the editor that in 1588, King Philip of Spain prepared to conquer Europe, like the Kaiser had done, and his “Invincible Armada” was destroyed when all classes of Britain worked together to raise a fleet, destroy the Spanish Armada, and usher in a hundred years of peace. Nichols compared the First World War to British

⁵⁷¹ Favours the New Recruitment Movement,” *Mail and Advocate*, 18 February 1916.

⁵⁷² Favours the New Recruitment Movement,” *Mail and Advocate*, 18 February 1916.

campaigns against King Louis XIV and Napoleon. He argued that these three British victories, won in the face of great odds, showed that “the dogged determination of the British race is bound to win.”⁵⁷³

“The Initiation of our Colony into the Brotherhood of Nations”

While many recruiters saw the First World War as a chance for Newfoundlanders to prove their Britishness, many also believed the war was an opportunity to show that Newfoundland deserved a more prominent role in the Empire. These recruiters believed that by making a significant contribution to the British war effort, the British government would recognize Newfoundland’s loyalty and give the Dominion a greater role in the Governance of the Empire. William Coaker made this position clear when he announced the deaths of 25 naval reservists aboard the *Viknor*:

Those brave sailor lads are the first offering made by Newfoundland upon the altar of sacrifice for the safety of the Empire. Their names will be forever enshrined in glory and their deaths will mark the initiation of our Colony into the brotherhood of the nations comprised within the great British Empire.⁵⁷⁴

Many people in Newfoundland believed that the First World War had finally given Newfoundland the opportunity to show the British Empire its true loyalty. This belief stemmed from the nationalism of D.W. Prowse, a prominent historian of Newfoundland, who argued that Newfoundland was a long serving, loyal, cornerstone of the Empire that was the victim of constant stumbling blocks that prohibited growth. Newfoundland’s participation in the war, however, was an opportunity, free from stumbling blocks, that

⁵⁷³ “The Dogged Determination of Our Race Will Win,” *Mail and Advocate*, 3 March 1916.

⁵⁷⁴ “Pres. Coaker Expresses Sympathy for Bereaved,” *Mail and Advocate*, 30 January 1915.

would allow the Dominion to show the rest of the Empire how important Newfoundland was. In May of 1915, M. Harnett of Marystown wrote a letter to the editor of the *Evening Telegram* that beamed with pride over Newfoundland's contributions to the war effort. He told the editor that "never before in the history of the world have Newfoundlanders been so intimately connected with – and played such a prominent part towards the Mother Country as they have since the starting of this war by the Kaiser whose idea it was to become supreme ruler of the land and sea."⁵⁷⁵

The NPA also harnessed this belief to stimulate recruiting numbers. In a recruiting drive in November 1916, they told people that Newfoundland had earned a greater place in the British Empire. The Dominion sent 4,500 soldiers and sailors to fight on land and at sea, many of those had been decorated for bravery and all had displayed the highest valour and conduct the Empire could ask for. According to the NPA, the performance of Newfoundland's sailors and soldiers had won undying fame for the Dominion. Despite their success, the NPA argued that more men had to be sent to the front to finish the job and to cement Newfoundland's place in the Empire for good. They argued that the government had spent too much money and lost too many men for the war effort. To not commit every last resource to ensure that the Germany was defeated and Newfoundland secured its place in the British Empire would be an insult to every man who died in France.⁵⁷⁶

In addition to an increased position in the British Empire, some concluded that Newfoundland's participation in the war had earned Newfoundland recognition on the

⁵⁷⁵ "Activity of Newfoundlanders," *Evening Telegram*, 17 May 1915.

⁵⁷⁶ "An Appeal," *Mail and Advocate*, 15 November 1916.

world stage. On 22 April 1918, the Returned Soldiers and Rejected Volunteers published a recruiting advertisement in several local newspapers. This advertisement informed readers that prior to the war, very few people around the world knew what Newfoundland was. It said that the actions of the RNR and NRNR had the whole world speaking of Newfoundland's greatness.⁵⁷⁷

In December 1916, the government of Newfoundland received a cable from David Lloyd George that proved, in some people's eyes, that Newfoundland had earned a new place in the British Empire. This cable was an invitation from Lloyd George for Edward Morris to travel to London to participate in the Imperial War Conference. The first conference comprised David Lloyd George, George Curzon, Bonar Law, and Walter Long from the United Kingdom; Robert Rogers, John Hazen, George Perley, and Robert Borden from Canada; Jan Smuts from South Africa; Billy Hughes from Australia; William Massey and Joseph Ward from New Zealand; Austen Chamberlain, James Meston, and Ganga Singh from India; and Edward Morris from Newfoundland. While it is not entirely clear what these men discussed at the Imperial War Conference, for many in Newfoundland it was enough to know that Newfoundland had a place at the Imperial table.⁵⁷⁸

Shortly after Morris returned from London, he addressed his participation in this conference in the House of Assembly. Morris expressed the importance of the conference and asked that all the members of the house join him in "rejoicing at the fact that Newfoundland, the oldest Colony of the Crown, was privileged to participate in this great council." He then emphasized that Newfoundland's role in the war was important as a

⁵⁷⁷ "Re-Enforcements," *Evening Advocate*, 22 April 1918.

⁵⁷⁸ John Fairlie, "British War Cabinets," *Michigan Law Review* 16 (May 1918), 484.

source of pride because it earned the respect of the British government and the British people; it showed that Newfoundland men were manly; and most importantly, it showed that Newfoundlanders were truly made of the same cloth as their British counterparts.⁵⁷⁹

In response to Morris's speech, Richard Devereaux told the house that the Imperial Conference ushered in a new epoch in which Britain would rely on its colonies not only for the physical efforts of their soldiers but also the intellectual efforts of their politicians. Using romantic language, Devereaux compared Lloyd George's call to the Prime Ministers of British Dominions to the Emperor of Rome calling in his consuls from across the Roman Empire:

...the Empire is calling on her children to assist her not only by her physical forces but by her intellectual. Then you have had in the capital city of the Empire the Prime Ministers of the younger nations in order to give by their knowledge and experience of colonial affairs that assistance expected of them. I hardly can find any parallel in relation to this great epoch unless you go back to Imperial Rome, which in the plenitude of her power had her consuls and her pro-consuls all the world over... Today you have more than twenty centuries later – a greater empire improving in great measure upon the procedure of ancient Rome, for Britain permits her governors to remain at their post of duty in her colonies, while she asks them to send their Prime Ministers to confer with her in the highest council of the Empire.⁵⁸⁰

He said that he was proud Morris was able to represent Newfoundland at such a historic occasion and was able to give “from his full knowledge and extensive experience in colonial and parliamentary life, much help to those who are the principal advisers in relation to this war.”⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁹ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 30 May 1917.

⁵⁸⁰ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 30 May 1917.

⁵⁸¹ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 30 May 1917.

Despite the importance and pride placed upon Morris's trip to London by some members of the House, not everyone in Newfoundland supported his participation in the Imperial Conference. The Liberal-Union opposition felt that Morris had abandoned his responsibilities to the Dominion by leaving Newfoundland for London. They attacked Morris, arguing that he should have remained in Newfoundland to help solve the rising cost of living and coal shortages that threatened to leave Newfoundland starving and in the dark.⁵⁸² This came to a head in April when the opening of the legislature was delayed until Morris returned to Newfoundland. In the House of Assembly W.F. Lloyd attacked Morris, demanding that the legislature open in his absence so the business of the Dominion could continue as normally as possible.⁵⁸³

As the war progressed, the number of men required to keep the Newfoundland Regiment in the frontlines grew and the Newfoundland government had difficulty in recruiting enough soldiers. As a result, recruiters not only used Newfoundland's British heritage to encourage men to enlist but increasingly used it to shame them into enlisting. Recruiting advertisements that denied the Britishness of the non-enlisted became more common. A typical example appeared in the *Daily News* on 30 October 1917:

Young able-bodied men, put this question to yourselves – Is your blood tingling in your veins? It must be if you are the true sons of British parentage. Breed must tell. The sons of sires who sprung from Dorset and Devon, from Cork and Waterford, and along the Forth and Clyde cannot but be loyal to their heritage and give proof of the mettle of their sires' pasture and their own. The blood tingles as you see the Empire's bravest sons pass by in sailor's blue or soldier's khaki. It cannot be otherwise. But is it tingling with pride, the joy of duty recognized and accepted, or with the shame of self-contempt?⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸² "The Times," *Mail and Advocate*, 16 May 1917.

⁵⁸³ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 30 May 1917.

⁵⁸⁴ "What do you Say," *Daily News*, 30 October 1917.

By suggesting that all those of British heritage would be eager to enlist, this advertisement suggested that any man who refused to enlist is a colonial, not a true Briton.

In a similar article, Miranda, a frequent columnist for the *Evening Advocate* informed her readers that Newfoundland soldiers were living up to the best of British ideals. She said that Newfoundland had long boasted of being “Britain’s oldest and loyal Colony” but was not living up to that reputation during the war. Instead, Miranda pointed out that Newfoundland had only sent one or two thousand soldiers when they should have sent 10,000 soldiers to set a good example for the other British Dominions. Miranda then posited that any eligible man who did not enlist was cowardly, indifferent, and un-British.⁵⁸⁵ The editor of the *Evening Advocate* shared the notion that no British man could resist the call to duty, arguing that no man, through whose veins British blood flows, could resist their duty.⁵⁸⁶

The argument that no true British man would refuse to enlist is powerful evidence of a renegotiation of British ethnicity that placed great importance on military service. This argument reinforces the link between Britishness and military service by validating the Britishness of soldiers and denying the Britishness of the non-enlisted. Due to the wartime connection between British ethnicity and military prowess, Newfoundland was very concerned about showing the other Dominions just how British they were. Newfoundland recruiters consistently told the public that Newfoundland’s war effort was an opportunity to show the Empire that Newfoundland men were equal to men from any other Dominion.

⁵⁸⁵ “Thoughts for Thought,” *Evening Advocate*, 13 November 1917.

⁵⁸⁶ “Where Duty Calls,” *Evening Advocate*, 6 April 1918.

As a result of the desire for Newfoundland to prove itself, from the very start of the war, recruiters made nearly constant comparisons to recruiting rates in other British Dominions. Four months into the war, people in Newfoundland were proud of the contribution Newfoundland was making to the war effort. In January 1915, the editor of the *Evening Telegram* praised the various Dominions for contributing such large amounts of sailors and soldiers to the war effort. In particular, he highlighted the 800 Newfoundlanders serving in the Royal Navy. Despite his praise for the navy, the editor also commended Newfoundland for supposedly keeping up with the recruiting rates of other Dominions.⁵⁸⁷

By January of 1916, the editor of the *Evening Telegram* was no longer pleased with the level of recruiting in Newfoundland. By this point, Britain had recruited approximately 6,000,000 out of a population of 46,000,000. Among the other Dominions, much to the editor's dismay, Newfoundland had the lowest recruiting rate. According to the editor, Australia was leading the pack with a large contingent sent from the Australian Naval Squadron, 250,000 soldiers in the trenches, 50,000 more soldiers departing by June, and additional drafts of 9,500 soldiers each month. The editor also praised New Zealand for sending forward 30,000 from a population of 1,000,000. Finally, the editor pointed out that Canada was lagging behind the other Dominions and that Newfoundland had the lowest recruiting rate out of them all. In concluding his article, he called on the government to step up and take measures to ensure that Newfoundland could keep pace with the other British Dominions.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁷ "The Solidarity of the Empire," *Evening Telegram*, 5 January 1915.

⁵⁸⁸ "Volunteering," *Evening Telegram*, 21 January 1916.

A few days later, the editor followed up with another article on Newfoundland's recruiting rates. He noted that a year ago, Newfoundland had the "pride of place in the friendly rivalry in regards recruiting here and in Canada." The editor informed his readers that this rivalry was now over and Canada was outpacing Newfoundland. He credited Canada for setting a recruiting goal and encouraged the Newfoundland government to do the same. He recommended that Canada's current enlistment of 220,000 (roughly 2.75% of the total population) would make an appropriate goal for the Dominion and would double the number of soldiers in the Newfoundland Regiment.⁵⁸⁹

In February of 1916, the *Evening Telegram* was pleased that the government announced that Newfoundland would raise a second battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment with ample troops in reserve. Despite this good news, the editor warned that the increases in the size of the Newfoundland Regiment were only moderate and if Newfoundland wanted to keep up with recruiting rates in Britain, then the government would have to raise seven times as many troops as they currently have. The *Evening Telegram* admitted it would take a lot of work to live up to the moderate increases the government proposed but stated that it was "a task which must be faced and carried out if Newfoundland is to hold up her head and carry herself with proper pride and patriotism among our kin across the seas."⁵⁹⁰ It seems clear that from these series of editorials that the editor of the *Evening Telegram* was concerned about keeping up with the other Dominions and how Newfoundland's recruiting rates were viewed in the British Empire.

⁵⁸⁹ "A Stimulus Needed for Recruiting," *Evening Telegram*, 27 January 1917.

⁵⁹⁰ "Our New Standard Two Battalions," *Evening Telegram*, 5 February 1917.

While the announcement of the formation of the Second Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, temporarily placated the editor of the *Evening Telegram*, he did not remain satisfied. Two weeks after the tragic loss of life at Beaumont Hamel, H.A. Winter again suggested that Newfoundland was not doing enough for the war effort. He said that Newfoundland was thinking too parochially and selfishly and the casualties at Beaumont Hamel should serve as a lesson. He warned the people of Newfoundland that the ranks of the regiment were depleted and advocated that they should be filled immediately. Winter told the readers of the *Evening Telegram* that Canada set a goal of 500,000; Australia 350,000; and New Zealand 80,000; each representing approximately seven percent of their total population. Comparatively, Newfoundland had only sent just over 5,500 and if Newfoundland would reach the standard set by the other Dominions, they would have to raise a total of 16,000 soldiers. Winter concluded this article by praising the majority of the island for their fine performance in enlisting. Despite his praise, Winter said that they still needed to increase their recruiting rates and while St. John's was doing admirably other districts were not. He advocated that every time a name appeared on a casualty list; another young man should rush to the recruiting center to take his place.⁵⁹¹

Despite the pressure to increase recruiting, Newfoundland's recruiting situation became worse as the war dragged on. In September of 1917, many became worried that the high casualty and low recruitment rates would result in the depletion of the Newfoundland Regiment and its removal from active service or incorporation into another regiment. As a result, the Recruiting Committee of the Newfoundland Patriotic Association and the editors

⁵⁹¹ "Are we Rowing Our Weight in the Boat?" *Evening Telegram*, 14 July 1916.

of all major newspapers in Newfoundland coordinated their efforts to recruiting enough volunteers to maintain the Regiment.⁵⁹²

In October, John Currie, the editor for the *Daily News*, made a desperate plea for Newfoundland to raise the 500-600 soldiers that the British Army required to keep the Regiment in the front lines. He provided a grave warning to the men of Newfoundland that if this final voluntary recruiting drive failed, than the government would likely have to resort to selective conscription, this was their last opportunity to come forward voluntarily.⁵⁹³ In addition to his threat of conscription, Currie sought to encourage men to enlist by highlight what he believed would be the national shame that would follow the removal of the Regiment from the field. He wrote:

It is unthinkable now that the regiment will be withdrawn or cease to exist as a separate unit. For more than two years it has gallantly held its place in the line, winning undying glory and bringing great imperishable honour to the country. It would be to our eternal shame if at this stage, when the end is near and victory in sight, we should fall in our duty at home, be disloyal to the great cause, to the men who are to-day so nobly upholding our name and fame, and to the memory of our honoured dead, who, having given their all, peacefully rest beneath the shell-torn fields of Gallipoli, of France and Flanders. The Regiment cannot be disbanded. It must be maintained.⁵⁹⁴

Currie suggested that it would be a great national disgrace for the Newfoundland Regiment to be removed from the field and the failure to maintain the Regiment would be an insult to every soldier who died.

By April 1918, the threat to the Royal Newfoundland Regiment (RNR) was still present and recruiters across the island desperately attempted to recruit enough soldiers to

⁵⁹² "A United Press," *Evening Advocate*, 3 September 1917.

⁵⁹³ "A Last Call," *Daily News*, 11 October 1917.

⁵⁹⁴ "A Last Call," *Daily News*, 11 October 1917.

keep the Regiment in the field. Andrew Bartlett, the editor of the *Western Star*, told his readers that the Regiment needed 300 new recruits immediately or the Regiment would be withdrawn from active service.⁵⁹⁵ Bartlett suggested that if each and every community in rural Newfoundland sent one man to enlist in the Regiment, they would meet the recruiting deadline immediately. The RSRVA also called on rural Newfoundland to maintain the Regiment. In an advertisement published in the *Evening Advocate*, the RSRVA told rural men that the Regiment was suffering badly and needed their help to stay in the trenches. The author told rural Newfoundlanders that refusing to enlist was just the same as seeing a friend falling overboard and watching them as they drowned. The editor of the *Evening Telegram* made the same analogy, arguing that a refusal to enlist would be akin to watching a friend drown while saying “Let him drown, I’m quite comfortable where I am, in my boat... If I get out after him, I may get wet,” or “I am too busy catching fish to attend to him.”⁵⁹⁶

Despite the many attempts of recruiters to encourage enough men to enlist to keep the Regiment in the field, on 3 May 1918, J.R. Bennett announced that the RNR had been removed from active duty with the 29th division and stationed as guards at Haig’s Headquarters in Montreuil.⁵⁹⁷ C.T. James described the withdrawal of the Regiment as a national shame and blamed the government for failing to recruit more men. James imagined that the soldiers, who earned their glory, who were removed from the field, must be enraged

⁵⁹⁵ “Play the Man,” *Western Star*, 17 April 1918. In December of 1917, the British Government bestowed the prefix Royal to the Newfoundland Regiment in honour of their actions at Ypres and Cambrai.

⁵⁹⁶ “Boys of the Outport We Want Your Help,” *Evening Telegram*, 20 April 1918.

⁵⁹⁷ “The Inevitable Has Happened! Our Eternal Disgrace,” *Evening Telegram*, 3 May 1918.

at the national government for not doing more to fill the ranks. To make matters worse, James declared that the removal of the Regiment from the field was a disgrace that would haunt Newfoundland for eternity.⁵⁹⁸ Not only did James place the blame for the withdrawal of the Regiment squarely on the shoulders of the Newfoundland government, he also demonstrated just how important the Newfoundland Regiment had become for Newfoundlanders.⁵⁹⁹

In the pages of the *Western Star*, Andrew Barrett also expressed anguish over the removal of the RNR. In an editorial, Barrett summarized the performance of the RNR, reminding the readers of the pride that Newfoundland shared as they followed the Regiment from their formation, training, and departure. He said that the hearts of the Dominion had rejoiced when the British Expeditionary Force raised the Newfoundland Contingent to an independent Regiment that would bear the Dominion's name for the Empire to see. He recounted with pride the accomplishments of the RNR from Alexandria to the Dardanelles and to their glory on the fields of Flanders, which earned them the title "Royal." Unlike the *Evening Telegram*, the *Western Star* did not blame the government for the failure of the Regiment. Instead, Barrett suggested the people of Newfoundland failed the Regiment by raising insufficient numbers of troops to preserve the Regiment. Barrett

⁵⁹⁸ "The Moment of Our Humiliation," *Evening Telegram*, 3 May 1918.

⁵⁹⁹ It is interesting to note that the removal of the Newfoundland Regiment from the frontlines has been remembered in a drastically different way in Newfoundland's cultural memory. In the official history of the Newfoundland Regiment, G.W.L. Nicholson describes the Regiment's posting to Haig's headquarters as an honour for the Regiment. Conversely, in 1918 it was viewed as a profound embarrassment for the Dominion.

said that Newfoundland's failure to maintain the Regiment and live up to the expectations of a British Dominion was "one of the saddest incidents in the history of Newfoundland."⁶⁰⁰

During the war, ethnicity in Newfoundland was reconfigured so that military service was a defining element of what it meant to be British. Recruiters in Newfoundland used this to encourage and shame men into enlisting. Recruiters declared that Newfoundland's volunteers were proof that Newfoundland was the most ancient and loyal British colony. At the same time, when men refused to enlist and recruiting plummeted, recruiters used this new conception of Britishness to shame men, denying their British ethnicity if they did not enlist.

The importance of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment to Newfoundland's British identity can be seen in their reactions to the withdrawal of the Regiment from the field. Whether people blamed the government or the people of Newfoundland, it is clear that the withdrawal of the Newfoundland Regiment from battlefield was a great disappointment for many people. On a basic level, the Royal Newfoundland Regiment was an element of intense pride for many in Newfoundland and to see them removed from active service was devastating. On a deeper level the RNR was more than a symbol of pride, it was also proof that the people of Newfoundland were true Britishers and not colonials. Viewed in this light, much like Korneski's view of the Railway, the RNR was a symbol that told the people of Newfoundland, and the rest of the British Empire, that Newfoundland could and did live up to British wartime standards of ethnicity and deserved a larger place in the British Empire.

⁶⁰⁰ "Where Do We Ring In," *Western Star*, 8 May 1918.

Conclusion

Newfoundland's involvement in the First World War caused a profound renegotiation of conceptions of gender and ethnicity. Prior to the war, concepts of masculinity focussed on men's abilities to provide for their families. During the war, recruiters in the Dominion argued that the pinnacle of masculinity was military service and they emphasized men's roles as protectors of the state over their roles as providers for their families. In addition to changing concepts of masculinity, recruiters in Newfoundland attempted to alter what it meant to be British, by suggesting that all true British men would rally around the flag and offer their lives for the Empire.

The renegotiation of gender and ethnicity by recruiters in Newfoundland seems to have been somewhat effective. Once recruiters had established that manly, British citizens would offer themselves up for service, the public reacted with incredible disdain towards the "slackers" who refused to enlist. Recruiters designed a host of letters to the editor, recruiting ads, poems, and public speeches to shame men into enlisting by suggesting that the un-enlisted were unmanly, un-British, and even potentially a threat to the Dominion. Some businesses even refused to hire able bodied, military aged men if they had not offered their services to the Naval Reserve or the Newfoundland Regiment.

Public and government expectations that all young men enlist in either the Naval Reserve or Newfoundland Regiment were a profound change in the liberal order. McKay's definition of Liberalism suggests that in a liberal democracy, the individual was not responsible to anyone but themselves and the voluntary commitments they made to others. During the war, recruiters made it clear that the men of Newfoundland were not responsible

to themselves alone. They were responsible to the Dominion and the British Empire. The liberal state expected all young, British men to be ready to lay down their lives for the greater good.

Chapter 6: Conscription

At the outset of the First World War, Newfoundland and the rest of the British Empire, had committed to following a plan of voluntary recruitment to support the British war effort. Initially, recruiting was highly successful and patriotic calls to duty resulted in a high rate of enlistment. However, as casualty rates increased, Newfoundland and the rest of the British Empire experienced difficulty recruiting enough soldiers to sustain the war effort. As recruiting rates declined, recruiters attempted to reconfigure conceptions of ethnicity and gender to encourage and shame men into serving. By early 1916, as voluntary recruiting continued to decline, governments across the British Empire began to discuss the merits of selective conscription. Britain introduced conscription in March of 1916, New Zealand in September 1916, and Canada introduced it by August of 1917. Australia, on the other hand, held two referendums that defeated conscription.

Much like the previous chapter on recruiting, this chapter will not be chronological but thematic. It will examine themes of ethnicity and gender that permeated the conscription debate in the Dominion of Newfoundland. It will examine the how supporters of conscription argued that conscription was necessary to ensure men lived up to wartime standards of ethnicity and gender, while keeping the Newfoundland Regiment alive. It will also examine the arguments of those who opposed conscription.

“A worse reptile never encumbered God’s earth than a man that is such a coward to hang back and willingly allow his countrymen to be slaughtered”

The imposition of conscription by Britain, New Zealand, and Canada started a public conversation in Newfoundland about whether or not the Dominion needed

conscription or if it was superior to voluntary recruiting. One powerful argument in favour of conscription was that many “slackers” in Newfoundland were refusing to do their duty as British citizens and should therefore be compelled into service. An early promoter of this argument was John Robinson. In December of 1916, Robinson believed that if conscription were to become necessary, it would be a bitter pill for any Briton to swallow as it would take away personal liberty, which was at the center of British freedom. Despite this, Robinson concluded that the freedoms enjoyed by British citizens came with a responsibility to defend the flag and anyone who refused to do so was worthless. He said that, because “slackers” in Newfoundland were not living up to the expectations of British men, the government should force them to serve. He set up a dichotomy between volunteers and conscripts that held the volunteer soldiers of the British Empire as “the most glorious achievement of the ages” while conscripts were “the refuse of Britain’s manhood.”⁶⁰¹

In the *Western Star*, Andrew Barrett also argued that the Newfoundland government should pass conscription if the NPA could not recruit enough volunteers for the Regiment. Like Robinson, Barrett also recognized the inherent contradiction in stripping the liberty of citizens and forcing them to fight for freedom. He wrote:

That individual liberty is a precious boon, all will agree. Everybody likes to be allowed to choose for himself. There is always certain amount of repugnance against being ordered or compelled. But when the very existence of a nation, and the ideals for which it stands are threatened, the collective good becomes paramount to the individual pleasure. That each should shoulder his share of the burden, and that the sacrifice involved should be equal is an axiomatic principle.⁶⁰²

⁶⁰¹ “Nauseas Though Necessary,” *Daily News*, 7 January 1916.

⁶⁰² “Voluntarism or Compulsion,” *Western Star*, 22 March 1916.

In this article, Barrett hit at the core argument of the conscription debate. He admitted that citizens should be free to choose the direction of their lives, however, he believed the dire circumstances of the war required a strong response. Therefore, Barrett reasoned that the rights of the nation outweighed the rights of the individual and as a result the government should coerce all eligible men into military service. Furthermore, by referring to conscripts as the “refuse of British manhood,” Barrett confirmed the importance placed on military service in wartime conceptions of masculinity.

In November of 1916, a fisherman from St. Mary’s, writing under the pseudonym “Coal Pits”, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Evening Telegram* advocating for conscription. Coal Pits said that any man who was cowardly enough to stay at home while other men did his fighting for him should be compelled to enlist.⁶⁰³ He thought that if Newfoundland allowed only the volunteers to fight and die in the trenches, the best men in the Dominion would be killed, leaving behind only the slackers. He wrote:

Let every man that is physically fit volunteer, or if not let us have conscription by all means and compel every man, unless he can show good reason why he should be exempted, if not all our good men will go and the only men we will have will be the slackers, and a worse reptile never encumbered God’s earth than a man that is such a coward to hang back and willingly allow his countrymen to be slaughtered and not life a hand to help save them... a slacker should be left to himself and shunned like a mad dog.⁶⁰⁴

Coal Pits not only stated that non-enlisted men were undeserving of their status as male citizens, but he also denied their humanity by comparing them to reptiles and encouraging the community to treat them like dogs. For him, conscription was a way of ensuring that

⁶⁰³ “No Place for Slackers,” *Evening Telegram*, 29 November 1916.

⁶⁰⁴ “No Place for Slackers,” *Evening Telegram*, 29 November 1916.

Newfoundland's best men did not die in Europe while inferior men survived by remaining at home.

Another article published in the *Evening Telegram*, in September 1917, surmised that voluntary recruiting was having a negative impact on the Dominion. In this article, an author writing under the pseudonym "Bull" told the editor that intelligent men had always been scarce in Newfoundland but such men were enlisting and leaving the "ignorant and vicious" to permanently damage Newfoundland society.⁶⁰⁵ He thought that a selective draft would allow the government to pick and choose who should serve, allowing them to select men whose absence would least damage the Dominion's culture and economy.

In November, H.A. Winter, got into a debate over the responsibility of the lack of recruits with P.T. McGrath, editor of the *Evening Herald*. According to McGrath, the people of Newfoundland were solely responsible for failing in their duty to come forward and enlist. Conversely, Winter argued that the government owed a duty to the Empire to ensure that citizens of the Dominion were encouraged, and if necessary, forced to do their patriotic duty. He said that from among the slackers in Newfoundland, over a thousand could be found who were of military age, physically fit, without dependents, or a valid excuse for not signing up. He believed that forcing these men to enlist would not be a hardship or injustice but would be righting a wrong. Winter denied the human value of shirkers by saying that the Dominion would not suffer if they died in France.⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰⁵ "A Strong Plea for the Regiment," *Evening Telegram*, 8 September 1917.

⁶⁰⁶ "The Truth About Conscription," *Evening Telegram*, 12 November 1917.

Eugenicist concerns over the biological impacts of the war were common throughout the British Empire. In “War as a Genetic Disaster? The First World War Debate Over the Eugenics of Warfare,” Paul Crook shows that prior to the war many people in the British Empire believed that a system on voluntary recruitment would result in an army that consisted of primarily working-class soldiers. This meant that more upper and middle class citizens (those who were traditionally viewed as biologically superior) would remain at home. After the outbreak of the war, however, many military experts argued that those who rushed to enlist were the best and brightest of the British Empire. Proponents of this argument argued that conscription would spread out the sacrifice so that those who were considered “biologically superior” did not make up the brunt of casualties. This same school of thought was present in Newfoundland and crystallized in many supporting conscription to prevent the destruction of Newfoundland’s bravest and brightest while allowing the cowards and shirkers to remain safely at home.⁶⁰⁷

In February of 1918, C.T. James, the newly appointed editor of the *Evening Telegram* found himself at odds with P.T. McGrath and the *Evening Herald*. This argument began on 15 February when P.T. McGrath published an article that argued the failure of voluntary recruiting was due to the cowardice of men in Newfoundland. James took umbrage with this and argued that Newfoundland’s fishermen were not cowardly but were discouraged from enlisting by a combination of ignorance and the lure of high fish prices.⁶⁰⁸ It is odd that James sought to defend rural Newfoundlanders by suggesting they

⁶⁰⁷ Paul Crook, “War as a Genetic Disaster? The First World War Debate Over the Eugenics of Warfare,” *War and Society* 8, No 1 (1990), 52.

⁶⁰⁸ “Stick to the Point,” *Evening Telegram*, 18 February 1918.

were not cowards but were motivated to stay home because of high fish prices. Throughout the war many recruiters painted fishermen who refused to enlist due to high fish prices were at best greedy war profiteers and at worst accessories to murder.⁶⁰⁹ In fact, James's predecessor as the editor of the *Evening Telegram*, H.A. Winter, accused fishermen of profiting of the misery and suffering of millions of people in Europe.⁶¹⁰

In response to the James's defence of fishermen, P.T. McGrath redoubled his accusations that the recruiting was slow because Newfoundlanders were cowards. On 19 February, P.T. McGrath responded to James, telling him that he would find plenty of slackers in the Clubs, theatres, and movies in the city. James replied that labelling men as slackers was not helpful in obtaining more recruits. He said that if the calls to patriotism and duty had not motivated men to enlist, they would need to be conscripted and attempts to shame them by calling them cowards and slackers would not work.⁶¹¹ Despite their disagreement over the reasons for men not enlisting, both the *Evening Herald* and the *Evening Telegram* agreed that conscription was required to ensure that men performed the patriotic duty that was required of all British men.

Three years of voluntary recruitment resulted in a drastic renegotiation of gender and ethnicity in Newfoundland. Recruiter's speeches, articles, and letters to the editor reconfigured conceptions of masculinity and Britishness to include service to the state as the primary responsibility for all British men. When recruiting rates declined, many recruiters resorted to a campaign of gendered and ethnic shaming, suggesting that those

⁶⁰⁹ "Last Night's Open-Air Recruiting Meeting a Great Success," *Evening Telegram*, 8 November 1916; "An Appeal," *Evening Advocate*, 15 April 1918;

⁶¹⁰ "To the Fishermen of Newfoundland," *Evening Telegram*, 30 October 1917.

⁶¹¹ "Cowardice," *Evening Telegram*, 22 February 1918.

who refused to enlist were un-British, unmanly and of little value to the Dominion. When this campaign of shaming failed many recruiters argued that the government needed to enact selective conscription to ensure that the government forced every man in Newfoundland to live up to the expectations of a male citizens in a British Dominion at war. Following the adoption of conscription, an author known as “Conscriptus” wrote a letter to the editor of the *Evening Advocate*, which praised the adoption of Selective conscription because it ended the campaign of shaming, the harassment of those labelled “slacker” and the “flow of white feathers” to men who had not enlisted.⁶¹²

“A More Unjust Selection It Would Be Impossible to Devise”

During the voluntary recruitment campaign, many citizens and government officials believed it was the primary duty of every man in Newfoundland to provide military service for the state, giving their life if need be. By 1916, when the Newfoundland Patriotic Association was having difficulty getting enough recruits to fill the ranks of the Newfoundland Regiment, many supporters of conscription argued that because every eligible man was expected to do his duty to the Empire, it was unfair to allow men to choose if they would enlist. Those who made this argument believed that it was only fair for the government to decide who served and who did not.

An early proponent of this argument was William Coaker, who initially opposed conscription. On 27 March 1916, Coaker gave a speech in the House of Assembly that addressed the voluntary recruiting campaign and conscription. He told the house that he

⁶¹² “Selective Conscription: How it Helps a Lot of Us,” *Evening Advocate*, 28 May 1918. For more on the issue of white feathering, see Chapter 6 on Women’s War Work.

believed in voluntary recruitment. He described those who enlisted to risk their life for their country as the “noblest creature that god ever made.”⁶¹³ Despite this, Coaker also said that if men stopped coming forward to support the Regiment that he would support conscription:

In connection with this subject I may state that I am a firm believer in the principle of conscription at such times as those we are now passing through... I say that should the day ever come when every young man is required to do his very best to safeguard our Empire, to uphold its flag, and to further the cause which it has espoused, and the volunteer system should fail, then every available man should compulsorily be called upon, and it should not be left to any man to refuse to go, and remain idly home and allow a few splendid, brave young men to go forth and fight for them. It ought to be the duty of every young man of a certain age, who is physically fit, to come forward and respond. Why should a certain number of men come forward voluntarily and go forth prepared to meet hardships and privations, to live the life of the trenches or to ceaselessly watch on one of the ships that helps to guard our Empire, to chance death itself, whilst others stay behind and live on the fat of the land, enjoying what our soldiers and sailors are preserving for us, and laughing at them for their pains? If ever conscription becomes necessary... I, for one, will have no hesitation in supporting a conscription act in this House.⁶¹⁴

Coaker’s statement makes it clear that even those who initially opposed the formation of the Regiment now believed that every Newfoundlander had the obligation to enlist. For Coaker, conscription was not about forcing “cowards” to enlist but making sure the duty placed on all British men was spread out equally.

Some opponents of conscription worried that it would damage the fishery, while supporters of conscription argued the opposite. In July of 1917, in the *Evening Herald*, P.T. McGrath warned that enacting conscription would take a heavy toll on Newfoundland’s fisheries and essential industries. In response to this, H.A. Winter responded in the *Evening Telegram*, informing his readers that selective conscription would not be a press gang that

⁶¹³ *Journal of the House of Assembly*, 27 March 1916.

⁶¹⁴ *Journal of the House of Assembly*, 27 March 1916.

would ham-fistedly conscript every single military aged man in Newfoundland. Winter believed that the Newfoundland's system of voluntary recruitment was unfair, saying: "the voluntary system is one of selection, and a more unjust selection is impossible to devise." He said that under voluntary enlistment, only the best men enlisted, leaving the worst remaining at home. Winter also argued that the voluntary recruiting system was unfair to communities across Newfoundland because some communities had sent more recruits than others. For example, Winter showed that Portugal Cove had sent nearly every eligible man, while barely a single man enlisted from their neighbouring communities. Selective conscription could rectify this, according to Winter, by having the Recruiting Committee select who they would draft from each community so that the least damage was done to the fishery in any one area of Newfoundland.⁶¹⁵

In July of 1917, the Methodist Conference of Newfoundland passed a resolution calling on the government to pass selective conscription. C.A. Whitemarsh, Secretary of the Methodist Conference, wrote a letter to Governor Davidson informing him that it was the opinion of the Methodist Conference that it was absolutely imperative to maintain the Regiment as an act of loyalty for those who had given their lives and those who were currently fighting. Whitemarsh emphasized that the Methodist Conference believed every citizen had a responsibility to provide military service to the state. He made this clear in their resolution when he wrote:

Whereas, the present system of recruiting is slow, costly and inefficient, and that it is the essence of Democracy that the rights and privileges of citizenship carry with them the obligation of service to the State to the extent of the surrender of all one's possessions, and even of life itself.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹⁵ "Compulsory Service," *Evening Telegram*, 7 July 1917.

⁶¹⁶ C.A. Whitemarsh to W.E. Davidson, 12 July 1917, PANL, GN 2.14.105.

Whitemarsh concluded his resolution by calling on the government to enact a law that require all male citizens to enroll so that they could draft a sufficient number to fill vacancies in the Newfoundland Regiment.⁶¹⁷

Another argument used in favour of selective conscription was that the injustice of voluntary recruiting was discouraging men from enlisting. In April of 1918, “Imperialist” wrote a letter to the editor of the *Evening Telegram* explaining why he believed that the voluntary recruiting system was a waste of time. Imperialist claimed he had travelled through many rural communities and everywhere he went men told him that they were neither disloyal nor unpatriotic. Instead, they told Imperialist that they would not enlist while there were slackers in their community who refused to go and lived comfortably at home. They said that if the government passed a bill making it mandatory for everyone to do their duty, then they would gladly come forward to enlist. Imperialist urged the government to pass a selective conscription bill not only because he believed it to be the best way to raise the men required for the Regiment but also because he believed it to be the only fair way to ensure that some men were not giving their lives while others “roll in wealth and luxury and grow rich out of the profits of war.”⁶¹⁸

A frequent columnist for the *Evening Advocate*, who wrote under the pseudonym “Orlick,” also extolled the judiciousness and equitability of selective conscription. In May of 1918, Orlick argued that under voluntary enlistment, some patriotic families had sent all of their sons to fight in the war, while other less patriotic families, with the same amount

⁶¹⁷ C.A. Whitemarsh to W.E. Davidson, 12 July 1917, PANL, GN 2.14.105.

⁶¹⁸ “Selective Conscription,” *Evening Telegram*, 9 April 1918.

of sons, had sent none at all. Orlick thought it was unfair for some men to have served for three or more years without a furlough home, while other men lived comfortably at home. He attacked men who remained at home saying “there are some individuals (I cannot call them men) who are perfectly satisfied to walk around and ignore the fact that some of the men in our Regiment have been wounded four and five times but before their wounds have become perfectly healed, they must return to the firing line because there are no others to fill the vacancies.”⁶¹⁹ For Orlick, selective conscription was not just a method of obtaining soldiers for the regiment but a way to ensure that the burden of the war was divided amongst all men and all families.⁶²⁰

“Newfoundland must and will do her full duty”

When the House of Assembly met in 1918, the largest matter of discussion was selective conscription. Governor Harris first broached the topic of conscription in his Speech from the Throne:

Since the last session of the Legislature the titanic struggle raging in Europe, in which Great Britain and her Allies are engaged, has shown no sign of diminishing, but on the contrary has assumed even vaster proportions and more menacing aspects. The lamentable breakdown of Russia as an effective belligerent in the Entente’s cause, which enabled the enemy to release vast armies from the eastern front and hurl them against the Allied line in France, has brought about a crisis in the great struggle which cannot but cause the gravest anxiety. In this hour of destiny, fraught with the most momentous issues for the British Empire, and the world, Newfoundland is called upon, in common with the Mother Country and other Overseas Dominions, to make further sacrifices in order to avert disaster. The Imperial War Council is calling on all portions of the Empire for additional men to aid in winning the war. “Men! Men! Men!” is the cry of the Prime Minister of the Home Land. This cry is echoed by the members of the Newfoundland Regiment, whose valour has won approbation from His Majesty the King in the bestowal of

⁶¹⁹ “Opinions of Orlick,” *Evening Telegram*, 11 May 1918.

⁶²⁰ “Opinions of Orlick,” *Evening Telegram*, 11 May 1918.

the honourable prefix “ROYAL” to the Regiment. Confronted with these urgent appeals for assistance, Newfoundland must and will do her full duty. Your immediate consideration will be asked to the need of enrolling men to replenish the ranks of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment by Selective Conscription, and a measure designed to accomplish that object will be laid before you without delay.⁶²¹

Harris’s speech emphasized the importance of conscription by drawing on the patriotic sentiment of the House of Assembly; reminding them that the British Empire desperately needed more men; and drawing on the pride that many citizens had for the Newfoundland Regiment.

In response to the throne speech, George Grimes stated that prior to the Spring Offensive, he believed that the only proper way to enact conscription would be to hold a referendum. The unprecedented advances by the German Army convinced Grimes that decisive action must be taken. Grimes warned the House that while Newfoundland was waiting for a referendum, Germany was quickly striking a death blow against Allied armies. Given the urgent nature of recruiting in the British Empire, Grimes argued that it was now necessary for Newfoundland to pass conscription in order to save Newfoundland’s honour, to save the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, and to prove that Newfoundland was the most loyal Dominion in the British Empire.⁶²²

On 24 April 1918, Prime Minister Lloyd introduced a bill in the House of Assembly titled “An Act Respecting Military Service.” The bill would allow the conscription of unmarried men between the ages of 19 and 40. If passed, this bill would split single men into four classes. The first class included unmarried men between the ages of 19 and 24, the second comprised men between the ages of 25 and 29, the third class consisted of men

⁶²¹ Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 23 April 1918.

⁶²² Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 22 April 1918.

between the ages of 30 and 34; and the fourth class was made up of men between the ages of 35 and 39. The Governor in Council could call up each of these classes and the men in each class would automatically become “soldiers of the King” at a date specified in a proclamation.⁶²³ Lloyd told the House that he introduced this bill because it was right and just, because the returned soldiers demanded it, and because it was absolutely essential to maintain the Regiment.

The bill also provided a process through which men could seek exemption from the draft for one of four distinct reasons: if their work was in the national interest; if they had one or two brothers and one was already enlisted; or if they had three or four brothers and two of them were already serving. If single men were primarily responsible for supporting their parents, brothers, or sisters, they could also apply for exemption. The final reason for exemption was for men whose health was so poor that their service would be of “no military value.”⁶²⁴ It is important to note that there was no exemption for conscientious objection.

Following the first reading of the conscription bill, there was very limited opposition. John Currie declared that he had always supported conscription from the beginning of the war as it was the best way to support the Regiment. Currie also advised the house that he did not care if his support for conscription cost him his seat in the next election, declaring that if young men were willing to sacrifice their lives for the war effort, he was more than happy to sacrifice his political career.⁶²⁵

⁶²³ Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 24 April 1918.

⁶²⁴ Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 24 April 1918.

⁶²⁵ Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 25 April 1918.

Similarly, J.R. Bennett also said that he was a supporter of conscription since the war began. While Bennett admitted that patriotism and loyalty fuelled the voluntary recruiting campaign in the beginning of the war, he advocated that the government pass new legislation to ensure the conscription of 1000 soldiers needed to maintain the Regiment. Bennett concluded his speech by saying that the bill was not only the most efficient way to attract enough recruits but also that selective conscription was the most judicial way of maintaining the regiment because it would put the least burden on families.⁶²⁶

The only instance of opposition to the conscription bill in the House of Assembly occurred on 25 April, when the House resolved itself to a Committee of the Whole on the bill. The first to address this bill in the committee was William Walsh, a People's Party member for Placentia and St. Mary's. Mr. Walsh acknowledged that conscription was necessary, however, he was adamant that the government had no business enacting Conscription without consulting the people. He told the house:

Mr. Speaker, in connection with [the conscription bill], is that, if it had been introduced by an assembly representative of the people, who had been sent here by the people, and would have to go back to the people, it would be a different matter. This measure is being introduced by men who have not the slightest intention of every offering themselves for re-election, men who have come here with their commissions in their pockets, men who have been taken out of one office, because there was not sufficient work there and put into another office so that they might be retained to give the appearance of a representative assembly to pass this measure or any other measure. I say, sir, it is unconstitutional, un-British, unfair, and the country will not have it. It is not for love of the British Empire that this bill is being put through, and it is not for the good of the country that these gentlemen are roused to this pitch of patriotism.⁶²⁷

⁶²⁶ Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 25 April 1918.

⁶²⁷ Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 25 April 1918.

Following a second reading of the bill, Walsh requested that the bill be deferred for two days to allow all members to give the bill some serious thought. Lloyd told Walsh, that it would be impossible to defer the bill because it was urgent and of the utmost national importance. Walsh was outraged that the Prime Minister denied his request. He told Lloyd that to deny a deferral on one of the most serious bills to have ever been introduced in a British House of Assembly was un-British and unfair. He told the House: “We are asked here to-day to conscript blood, and I do not think in view of the nature of the Bill that it is reasonable to have this request refused.”⁶²⁸ Despite his protest, the bill was read a following time the next day, passed, and sent to the Legislative Council.

Michael Gibbs, a former Conservative M.H.A and Mayor of St. John’s, was the only voice of dissent on the conscription issue in the Legislative Council.⁶²⁹ With a little debate on some amendments, the Legislative Council passed the Military Service act and the Governor gave it Royal Assent. What is clear from the speeches given by the various members of the Council was that while all members lamented the failure of voluntary recruitment, there was some debate over who was responsible. Augustus Goodridge, a former Tory Premier of Newfoundland, and Robert Bishop, a partner in Bishop Brothers Ltd., believed that the people of Newfoundland had been given ample opportunity to enlist and that it was a failure of the people. Richard Squires, on the other hand, laid the blame on members of the opposition for a failure to fully support the formation of the Newfoundland Regiment at the beginning of the war. Still others, like Mr. Gibbs argued

⁶²⁸ Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 26 April 1918.

⁶²⁹ M.P. Gibbs was a lawyer, and was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1909 by Edward Morris. Prior to this he was instrumental in the foundation of the Longshoreman’s Protective Union, which he advocated for until his death.

that it was the government who failed in their duty to set concrete goals and make detailed plans to achieve those goals. Despite the debate over who was to blame, it is clear that the vast majority of members of the Legislative Council believed that Newfoundland had a duty to maintain the Newfoundland Regiment and was failing to do so.

Opposition to recruiting and Conscription

Throughout the war, recruiters told the people of Newfoundland that military service was the pinnacle of both masculinity and Britishness. They argued that all men had a duty to provide military service to the state and those who refused to provide military service were cowards, slackers, un-British, and unmanly. Despite the powerful influence of recruiters, who sought to redefine masculinity and Britishness, not everyone in Newfoundland bought into this wartime renegotiation of British masculinity.

Gauging the level of opposition to Newfoundland's war effort, recruiting and conscription is difficult. There is no evidence that there was any organized opposition to the war or pacifist movement in Newfoundland. Despite this, it seems clear that some parts of Newfoundland society were less than receptive to the war effort, recruiting campaigns, and particularly conscription. The lack of source material hinders any analysis on the prevalence of opposition, conscientious objection, or pacifism. Given the importance placed on patriotism during the war, it is likely that newspapers would have been unwilling to publish anything that could be considered "unpatriotic." Therefore, it was very likely that newspapers would not publish editorials or letters to the editor that could potentially damage Newfoundland's war effort. To make matters worse, in 1917 the Colonial Secretary appointed a press censor who had the power to ban any newspapers publishing

“unpatriotic” material.⁶³⁰ Despite this, there is some evidence of varying levels of opposition to the war effort.

Some of the first criticism of Newfoundland’s participation in the war came from William Coaker. Shortly after the war began, the *Mail and Advocate* published an article that criticized both the *Evening Telegram* and the *Daily News* for advocating for the formation of a Newfoundland Regiment.⁶³¹ Coaker thought forming a Newfoundland Regiment was an unnecessary expense that the Dominion could not afford. Instead of wasting money on a Newfoundland Regiment, Coaker argued that the Dominion should focus on recruiting men to enlist with the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve and encouraging those who wanted to serve with the army to enlist with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Coaker did not oppose the war effort, just the Dominion having its own regiment.

Coaker’s opposition to the Newfoundland Regiment drew the ire of many people in Newfoundland. The *Daily News* published an angry letter from a naval reservist stationed on the *Calypso*. The reservist warned Coaker that if he lived in the United Kingdom, his printing press would have been destroyed by angry mobs an hour after the paper was printed.⁶³² William Temple said Coaker had brought shame upon the Dominion by giving anything less than his full support to the formation of a Regiment. Temple also accused Coaker of being a hypocrite by taking advantage of the freedoms the British government offered its citizens that allowed him to publish such treasonous material.

⁶³⁰ “Press Censor,” *Daily News*, 22 February 1917.

⁶³¹ “Harmonious Harping,” *Mail and Advocate*, 20 August 1914.

⁶³² “Now Who Is The Mob Instigator,” *Mail and Advocate*, 1 October 1914.

Instead of hindering recruiting efforts, Temple recommended that Coaker support the defense of the British law that allowed him to publish his “obnoxious sheet.”⁶³³

In response to the letter published in the *Daily News*, the editor of the *Mail and Advocate*, published an editorial that criticized the publication of such a threat. H.M. Mosdell, editor of the *Mail and Advocate* in 1914, highlighted the hypocrisy of an English newspaper editor publishing an article written by an English naval officer, which called for mobs of angry men to destroy the *Advocate*’s printing press, while England was described as the defender of freedom and tolerance. Mosdell asked the fishermen of Newfoundland to carefully consider what respect the *Daily News* has for the rule of law and concluded that “it is time the fishermen kept their powder dry and their guns well primed. Those who play with fire must not complain if by so doing they burn their fingers.”⁶³⁴

The *Mail and Advocate* also published several letters to the editor that opposed the war effort. One letter, written by an author named “Determined” from Elliston, expressed the author’s desire to take up arms, not against the Germans, but against “Surtax Morris” and his party that were ruling the Dominion with an iron rod. Determined argued that Morris’s policy of taxation was unfair to fishermen and were starving their families. Before going to fight the Germans in Europe, Determined declared that the fishermen of Newfoundland should unite and defeat the Germans who were ruling the country.⁶³⁵ In another letter to the editor, an author by the name of “Common Sense” defended his belief

⁶³³ “The War from Our Point of View,” *Twillingate Sun*, 22 August 1914.

⁶³⁴ “Now Who Is the Mob Instigator,” *Mail and Advocate*, 1 October 1914.

⁶³⁵ “Strong Feeling,” *Mail and Advocate*, 17 October 1914.

that fishermen were the lifeblood of the country and that they should not be depleted by the war effort.⁶³⁶

Despite Coaker's initial opinions regarding the formation of a Newfoundland Regiment, the negative reaction he received from the general public meant that his vocal opposition was very short lived. By early 1916, John St. John, the new editor of the *Mail and Advocate*, admitted that Coaker initially opposed the Regiment and still felt the same way. However, St. John noted that Coaker would not publicly oppose recruiting efforts in order to avoid dividing the public during such a national crisis.⁶³⁷ In the same article, seemingly to prove that Coaker was not being unpatriotic, St. John highlighted Coaker's efforts to obtain recruits for the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve on behalf of the Newfoundland Patriotic Association.

Coaker's opposition to the formation of a Newfoundland Regiment was very well documented but lasted only a brief period of time. The opposition to conscription, is much harder to discern. In early 1918, some newspapers published editorials that did not outright oppose conscription but warned about the repercussions of it. On 6 April 1918, P.T. McGrath published an article in the *Herald*, which argued that selective conscription would not work in Newfoundland because "it is not feasible to take young men from fishing boats and replace them with women and children, or to put the latter in the mines or in the lumber woods."⁶³⁸ McGrath's concern, which seems to be shared by many fishermen, was that

⁶³⁶ "Common Sense Writes on Recruiting," *Mail and Advocate*, 18 February 1915.

⁶³⁷ "Patsy's Nightmare," *Mail and Advocate*, 15 January 1916.

⁶³⁸ "Selective Conscription Feasible," *Evening Telegram*, 6 April 1918.

selective conscription would strip rural Newfoundland of its male labour and result in economic decline for families and for the Dominion.

Shortly after McGrath published this article, Miranda, a frequent columnist for the *Evening Advocate*, also expressed concern about the number of fishermen taken from rural Newfoundland. Miranda told their readers that country was entirely dependent on the fishery and that women could not perform the majority of the work of the fishery because of its arduous nature. Similarly, Miranda also stated that women could not perform the work of lumbermen. They argued that the removal of large amounts of men would be detrimental to the economy of Newfoundland and would result in the Dominion requiring financial assistance from Britain. Miranda concluded their article by placing the blame for the recruiting situation directly on the shoulders of men who were eligible but refused to enlist.⁶³⁹

As the calls for conscription increased, those who opposed conscription also became more vocal. On 27 April 1918, W.J. O'Neill, editor of the *Plaindealer*, published a scathing article, attacking the government's attempts to pass a conscription bill without consulting the people. O'Neill had two primary issues with the government's handling of the Military Service Act. The first was that the government refused to hold a referendum on the conscription issue. O'Neill was outraged that the government would attempt to force men to enlist in the military without consulting them on the debate. He reminded his readers that Canada and Australia had elections or referendums where the people had an opportunity to vote on conscription and wondered if the Newfoundland government

⁶³⁹ "Thoughts for Thought," *Evening Advocate*, 9 April 1918.

believed that its citizens were too unstable or unpatriotic to be trusted to vote on the matter.⁶⁴⁰ O'Neill did not necessarily disagree with conscription in principle, but he firmly believed the government should consult the people on the matter before it was passed into law.

W.J. O'Neill's other issue with conscription was W.F. Lloyd's coupling of the Military Service Act with another act titled "An Act to Further Extend the Term of the Present Legislature." Lloyd explained that this bill would allow the current government to serve for another year without an election and his bill was vital to the successful implementation of the Military Service Act because it would prevent a General Election, which would potentially derail conscription.⁶⁴¹ O'Neill, on the other hand, did not believe that the national government sincerely believed that an extension of Parliament was necessary for the implementation of conscription. Instead, he accused Lloyd and Coaker of making a pact with the governor whereby they would support conscription in return for an extension of their mandate.⁶⁴² O'Neill strongly believed that the combination of these two acts were wholly unconstitutional and a gross violation of the rights of the people:

... we can promise that any attempt to override and ignore the sovereign rights of the people will meet with strong opposition on the part of the entire electorate. It would be an outrage and a gross violation of our constitutional rights if the present "rump" Parliament were to be firmly installed to power as a result of this corrupt and dishonest bargaining. We can assure that parties involved that the question will not be allowed to rest, and to be decided within the four walls of the House of Assembly... Throughout the length and breadth of the land the people are demanding an election, in order that they may be enabled to express their opinions upon many momentous questions that have lately arisen. They are entitled as of right to the exercise of franchise at least once in every four years. By their dishonorable and corrupt compact, the Governor has made himself a consenting

⁶⁴⁰ "Trust the People!" *Plaindealer*, 27 April 1918.

⁶⁴¹ Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 25 April 1918

⁶⁴² *Plaindealer*, 27 April 1918.

party to this violent assault upon the liberties of the people, he has consented to become a tool in the hands of Coaker and his satellites in order that the passage of Conscription may be assured.⁶⁴³

O'Neill's attacks on the Prime Minister, the Governor, and specifically the Military Service Act would quickly earn him the ire of Prime Minister W.F. Lloyd.

On the morning of 27 April, after reading the *Plaindealer*, Prime Minister Lloyd took his copy of the newspaper and requested an urgent meeting with Governor Harris. In this meeting, Lloyd told Harris the *Plaindealer* had accused them of making a pact with Coaker in order to pass conscription and called for an uprising against the Military Service Act. Lloyd requested that Harris sign a Minute of Council that would allow him to suppress this issue of the paper and to seize the office of the *Plaindealer* in order to prevent any additional anti-conscription material from being printed. Governor Harris told Lloyd he believed in giving people like O'Neill "enough rope to hang themselves," and suggested that very little would come of one edition of a disreputable newspaper. The Prime Minister insisted that this issue could cause a "violent outburst" against the conscription Bill.⁶⁴⁴ Lloyd insisted that this newspaper was so inflammatory that he might as well withdraw the bill, as it would have no hopes of passing if the *Plaindealer* published this edition.

The Governor eventually acquiesced to Lloyd's request. He believed that his personal feelings on the censorship of the *Plaindealer* should not influence the matter and he signed the Minute of Council that read:

Under the provisions of the War Measures Act, it was ordered, on recommendation of the Minister of Justice, that the Inspector General of the Constabulary be instructed to enter and take charge of the office of the PLAINDEALER in St. John's

⁶⁴³ *Plaindealer*, 27 April 1918.

⁶⁴⁴ C.A. Harris to Arthur Long, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 April 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1918, Box 99, Despatch 473.

with all its contents, consisting of machinery, press, type, paper, and all other things of every description and to hold the same subject to the instructions of the Minister of Justice; and to seize, suppress, and destroy the issue of the *PLAINDEALER* of date April 27th, 1918, whenever and wherever any copies of that issue are found. It was also ordered that the Postmaster General shall be instructed to seize and destroy all copies of the said issue of the *PLAINDEALER* of the 27th April 1918 which may be passing through the mails or in the possession of any postmasters in the Dominion.⁶⁴⁵

Within the hour, the Newfoundland Constabulary had seized the office of the *Plaindealer*. Shortly after the police had entered the premises, C.H. Hutchings called Lloyd, while he was still in Harris's office, to determine how much he should interfere with the operations of the *Plaindealer*. Lloyd informed Hutchings and the Governor that they would allow the *Plaindealer* to operate, but the police would ensure the newspaper did not publish anything that would interfere with the passing of the Military Service Act.⁶⁴⁶

On the same day that the Newfoundland Constabulary seized the premises of the *Plaindealer*, the Prime Minister addressed the House of Assembly on the issue. He justified the crack down on the *Plaindealer*:

This action has been taken in consequence of to-day's issue being directed against Conscription. The Government will not hesitate to use its full power and strength against any effort made to hinder recruiting or in any way impede the carrying out of Conscription. I make this announcement in order that the public may understand fully the Government's attitude in this matter.⁶⁴⁷

Lloyd informed the house that the police had taken charge of the *Plaindealer* and were preventing the anti-conscription issue from circulating. He also promised the house that the

⁶⁴⁵ Copy of Minute of Executive Council, 27 April 1918, PANL, GN 2.14.75.

⁶⁴⁶ C.A. Harris to Arthur Long, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 April 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1918, Box 99, Despatch 473.

⁶⁴⁷ Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 27 April 1918

constabulary would not interfere with the daily operations of the *Plaindealer*, other than ensuring that O'Neill published no more anti-conscription material.⁶⁴⁸

Despite giving his word to both the Governor and the House of Assembly that he would allow the *Plaindealer* to operate under police supervision, Lloyd ordered the Constabulary to shut the *Plaindealer* down for two weeks and prevent any publication whatsoever. On 6 May, P.J. Summers drafted a bond that would finally allow the *Plaindealer* to resume publication.⁶⁴⁹ The following day, W.J. O'Neill signed a bond that allowed him to resume publication if he agreed not to publish any material that was not pre-approved by the Inspector General of the Newfoundland Constabulary. The penalty for breaking this bond was an exorbitant fine of \$5,000.⁶⁵⁰

The *Plaindealer* was not the only newspaper to face censorship for publishing opposition to conscription. The day after Governor Harris gave the Military Service Act Royal Assent, he wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies to inform him that conscription had passed in Newfoundland. He told Long that St. John's undoubtedly supported conscription. Despite the support in St. John's, Harris stated he believed rural Newfoundland opposed conscription.⁶⁵¹

Harris was right about the anger over conscription in rural Newfoundland. Two days after the conscription became law, there was a riot in Wesleyville. While the details of this incident were scarce, the *Evening Telegram* reported that a group of men in

⁶⁴⁸ Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 27 April 1918

⁶⁴⁹ P.J. Summers, Deputy Justice Minister, to W.W. Halfyard, Colonial Secretary, 6 May 1918, PANL, GN 2.14.75.

⁶⁵⁰ W.W. Halfyard to P.J. Summers, 7 May 1918, PANL, GN 13.1.B, Box 142, File 21.

⁶⁵¹ C.A. Harris to Arthur Long, 14 May 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1918, Despatch 564.

Wesleyville were upset with the passing of the Military Service bill and rioted through the community, interrupting a patriotic parade. The riots came to a crescendo when a local Priest gave a pro-conscription sermon, resulting in many parishioners storming out of the church.⁶⁵²

Two days after the *Evening Telegram* reported on the rioting in Wesleyville, W.W. Halfyard (an FPU M.H.A for Fogo who replaced J.R. Bennett as Colonial Secretary) sent a letter to the editors of every major newspaper. Halfyard informed the editors they could not publish any material that could potentially encourage opposition to conscription. He used the “trouble at Wesleyville” as an example of exactly the kind of material that newspapers were not to be allowed to publish. Halfyard warned that if any newspaper published articles that could damage conscription, the government would shut the newspaper down and suppress any offending issues.⁶⁵³

Despite this stern warning from the Colonial Secretary, H.M Mosdell published several articles in the *Daily Star* that criticized how the government was enforcing conscription. On 23 May, Mosdell complained that many fishermen whom the Regiment would certainly medically exempt from military service were being unfairly treated by a requirement that they travel to St. John’s to be medically examined. Mosdell said that this process was slow and resulted in fishermen waiting in St. John’s instead of fishing.⁶⁵⁴ He complained that regulations prohibiting men of military age from going to sea, unless they possessed a rejected volunteer badge, inconvenienced fishing crews. He pointed out that

⁶⁵² “Sedition,” *Evening Telegram*, 16 May 1918.

⁶⁵³ W.W. Halfyard to John Currie, Editor Daily News, 18 May 1918, PANL, GN 2.14.75.

⁶⁵⁴ “Incapacity,” *Daily Star*, 23 May 1918.

many crews had rejected volunteers who offered their service before the government began issuing badges. In instances like this, Customs Officers held up entire fishing crews while they verified a single man's status.⁶⁵⁵ On 28 May, Mosdell also reported that he had received many angry letters from fishermen who were unable to obtain exemption papers, resulting in the fishery coming to a standstill in some areas.⁶⁵⁶

The following day, W.W. Halfyard, asked Harris for approval for a Minute of Council that would allow the Constabulary to seize the *Daily Star's* premises and remain for two or three days to ensure they did not publish more material that interfered with the enforcement of conscription. Harris gave his approval and a Minute of Council was issued which read:

Under the provision of the War Measures Act, it was ordered that the Superintendent of Constabulary be instructed to enter and take charge of the office of the St. John's Daily Star with all its contents, consisting of machinery, presses, typesetting machines, types, paper, and all other things of every description and to hold the same subject to the instructions of the Deputy Minister of Justice, and to seize, suppress, and destroy the issue of the St. John's Daily Star of May 23rd and May 28th 1918, whenever and wherever any copies of these issues are found. It was also ordered that the Postmaster General shall be instructed to seize and destroy all copies of the said issues of the St. John's Daily Star of the 23rd and 28th May 1918, which may be passing through the mails or in the possession of any Postmaster in the Dominion.⁶⁵⁷

When the police entered the premises of the *Daily Star*, they not only suppressed the issues included in the Minute of Council, but they also shut down the presses and refused the publication of any material.

⁶⁵⁵ "More of It," *Daily Star*, 23 May 1918.

⁶⁵⁶ "Tying Men Up," *Daily Star*, 28 May 1918.

⁶⁵⁷ Arthur Mews, Deputy Colonial Secretary to R.A. Squires, 30 May 1918, QEII Library, Archives and Special Collections (ASC), COLL-250, 4.01.010

By 5 June, the Newfoundland Constabulary had yet to leave the office of the *Daily Star* and had completely shut the newspaper down for six days. When news reached Governor Harris that the police were still prohibiting the *Daily Star* from publication, he was outraged. Harris sent a telegraph to W.W. Halfyard chastising him for interfering with the business of the *Daily Star* for so long. The Governor reminded Halfyard that when he approached him to approve the Minute of Council, he promised that the Constabulary would only be in the *Star's* office for two or three days and their regular publication would not be impeded. Once Harris learned that Halfyard had broken his promise, the governor phoned the Deputy Minister of Justice and told him to lift the embargo immediately and declared that he was committed to “avoiding all tyrannical use of the War Measures Act.”⁶⁵⁸

The governor was not the only person who thought the closure of the *Daily Star* was overzealous. Richard Squires, the majority shareholder of the *Daily Star*, argued that the ham-fisted censorship of his newspaper was “a violation of the fundamental principles for which our forefathers fought and bled and died, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of conscience,” and that the suppression “was a malicious, vindictive attack upon myself and the newspaper for political purposes.”⁶⁵⁹ He defended the articles, arguing that they were legitimate criticisms of the way the government was implementing conscription and did not attack conscription itself. On 2 June, in an attempt to lift the suppression of his

⁶⁵⁸ C.A. Harris to W.W. Halfyard, 5 June 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1918 Despatch 648.

⁶⁵⁹ R.A. Squires to Reverend Harry Royle, 5 June 1918, ASC, COLL-250, 4.02.005; and R.A. Squires to Gilbert Gosse, Esq., 18 June 1918, ASC, COLL-250, 4.02.005

newspaper, Squires filed an application for an injunction from the Supreme Court of Newfoundland for the removal of the Constabulary to leave the premises.

When the Colonial Secretary replied to Harris's letter. He told the Governor that there must have been a misunderstanding because he had made no promises to be out of the *Daily Star's* office within two or three days.⁶⁶⁰ In a separate letter, M.P. Cashin, informed Harris that it was the government's intention to close the *Daily Star* for approximately one week and that the embargo would be lifted by 6 June. Despite this, Cashin admitted that Richard Squires's application to the Supreme Court would delay the reopening of the newspaper because opening it before the Court issued a decision would give the appearance that the government believed their actions were not legal.⁶⁶¹ Cashin also criticized the Governor for becoming involved in an issue that was wholly the responsibility of the government:

I would respectfully point out that it would be an unwise policy for Your Excellency, as a constituent factor in the administration of this Dominion, to proceed with the policy which your letter suggests and insist upon a raising of the embargo in the meantime. I would suggest that our proper course is to await the decision of the Supreme Court, and if it should be in favour of the Government, then we would be in a position ourselves to at once allow the "Star" to republish.⁶⁶²

Cashin further expressed displeasure that the Governor would directly interfere with the government by ordering the Deputy Justice Minister to lift the embargo:

I hope I may be pardoned if I express my surprise that Your Excellency should have thought it proper to communicate directly with the Deputy Minister of Justice to tell him that the embargo must be withdrawn at once. I write this at the close of the Committee of the Council, to which I submitted your letter, and this embodies the views of both my colleagues and myself.⁶⁶³

⁶⁶⁰ W.W. Halfyard to C.A. Harris, 5 June 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1918 Despatch 648.

⁶⁶¹ M.P. Cashin to C.A. Harris, 5 June 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1918 Despatch 648.

⁶⁶² M.P. Cashin to C.A. Harris, 5 June 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1918 Despatch 648.

⁶⁶³ M.P. Cashin to C.A. Harris, 6 June 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1918 Despatch 648.

Upon receiving Cashin's response, Governor Harris drastically changed his tone. He admitted that it was inappropriate from him to call the Deputy Justice Minister as it may have seemed that the governor was ordering the end of the embargo, which was not his prerogative to do. Despite his change of tone, Harris did not back down on his recommendation that the government end the embargo on the *Daily Star*. He reminded Cashin that the people would likely blame him for the excessive use of the War Measures Act to censor the *Star*.⁶⁶⁴

Harris's recommendations that the government end the embargo on the *Daily Star* ended up meaning little as the Supreme Court had reached a decision on 6 June. Chief Justice William Horwood ruled that the government had every right to suppress, seize, and destroy issues of the *Daily Star* that they deemed were a threat to Newfoundland's war effort. However, Horwood also stated that the Constabulary carried out the objectives of the Order in Council, to suppress, seize, and destroy the offending issues by 30 May. He ruled that while the War Measures Act did allow the government to censor certain material, the act "cannot be presumed to have intended to exercise it or to interfere with the rights of a subject, to a greater extent than is necessary to accomplish the purpose calling for its action."⁶⁶⁵ Given that the *Daily Star* had not attempted to publish any more material that

⁶⁶⁴ C.A. Harris to M.P. Cashin, 6 June 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1918 Despatch 648.

⁶⁶⁵ *Daily Star Publishing Co. v. Grimes, et al.* Supreme Court of Newfoundland, 6 June 1918, Law Society of Newfoundland Law Library.

could compromise the Military Service Act, Chief Justice Horwood granted the injunction and ordered the Constabulary to immediately vacate the office of the *Daily Star*.⁶⁶⁶

The incident with the *Plaindealer* and the *Daily Star* is very interesting for several reasons. Lloyd's crackdown on the *Plaindealer's* and *Daily Star's* anti-conscription articles suggests that there was enough opposition to conscription in rural Newfoundland that the Prime Minister feared a single article could potentially whip rural fishermen into a frenzy that would crush any hopes of passing conscription. Second, by crushing any dissent to conscription before the House of Assembly passed the bill, the government showed just how determined they were to passing conscription, regardless of how much support it had amongst the people of Newfoundland. Finally, the extreme lengths to which the government went to prevent the publication of material against Conscription meant that it was very likely there was more opposition to conscription in Newfoundland that went unpublished in local newspapers.

Importantly, these incidents also represented tension in the wartime renegotiations of the relationship between citizens and the state. In this case, the Newfoundland government not only believed that male citizens owed their lives to the state but also that private citizens had no right to interfere in how the state obtained military service from citizens. The *Plaindealer* and *Daily Star* pushed back against the government, arguing that they were not interfering with conscription but legitimately criticizing the way the government was enacting it. By reacting swiftly to the protests of these newspapers, the

⁶⁶⁶ *Daily Star Publishing Co. v. Grimes, et al.* Supreme Court of Newfoundland, 6 June 1918, Law Society of Newfoundland Law Library; and *Conroy & Higgins to W.W. Halfyard*, 6 June 1918, PANL, GN 2.14.75.

government showed that they cared little for the liberal right to free speech and that they would ensure conscription passed regardless of the opposition.

Another important source of information about opposition to conscription in Newfoundland came from correspondence between William Coaker and the various FPU councils across the Dominion. On April 26th, Coaker sent a circular to all FPU Councils in Newfoundland. Coaker told FPU members that if enough recruits came forward, the government would not need to enforce the Military Service Act until the fall, if at all, and men would be free to prosecute the Labrador fishery without interference. While encouraging men to enlist might seem benign, many recruiters viewed Coaker's circular to be a wilful call for men to oppose the Military Service Act. The *Evening Telegram* was one of many papers that accused Coaker of attempting to encourage men to resist the Military Service Act.⁶⁶⁷

Speaking in the House of Assembly, William Coaker defended this circular maintaining that he intended to ease the rampant opposition to conscription in Northern Newfoundland. His statements to the house show just how much opposition existed to the Military Service Act:

...I want this House and the Country to understand, that the people did not want conscription. I tell you that if it had gone to the vote, it would have been defeated two to one... Why did I send that circular? Because the people were aflame. I know that the slightest friction would be as a match to powder, and the whole North would have been aroused in opposition.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁷ "In His True Colours," *Evening Telegram*, 13 May 1918.

⁶⁶⁸ Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 11 May 1918.

Coaker told the house that he had received hundreds of messages from FPU members and FPU councils calling on him to oppose the Military Service Act. Despite this, he was determined to do his duty and support conscription.⁶⁶⁹

On an individual level, some men showed their opposition to conscription by refusing to enlist, despite the threat of a criminal conviction and jailtime. In July of 1918, two brothers Job and Jabez Taylor of Kelligrews received draft papers but refused to report to the Newfoundland Regiment in St. John's. On two occasions the local Magistrate gave Job and Jabez the opportunity to present themselves for enlistment, but on both occasions the brothers refused. On 11 July 1918, the Constabulary arrested the pair for breaching the Military Service Act and a Magistrate sentenced them to two years in prison. After seven days in prison, the Taylor brothers requested that the Justice Department release them so they could join the Newfoundland Regiment. Initially, both P.J. Summers, the Deputy Justice Minister, and Governor Harris agreed to pardon them and release them on the condition that they join the Regiment. However, before Summers released the men, he found out that they had applied for exemption, which Jabez had received. Summers was now convinced that neither brother had the intention of enlisting. He withdrew his request for clemency for the two men and asked the governor to allow them to remain in prison.⁶⁷⁰ On 1 September, following a ruling by the Military Service Tribunal, Governor Harris requested that Jabez be released because he had received exemption and that Job be

⁶⁶⁹ Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 11 May 1918.

⁶⁷⁰ P.J. Summers to C.A. Harris, 1 August 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1918 Despatch 837.

released on the condition that he immediately join the Newfoundland Regiment.⁶⁷¹ Job never reported for enlistment.

In October, the Constabulary arrested Berkley Davis of Pinchard's Island for defaulting on the Military Service Act. Magistrate Mifflin of Greenspond sentenced Berkley to three years in prison. Upon arrival, P.J. Summers recommended that Governor Harris release Davis on the condition that he enlist in the Regiment. Davis refused Summer's offer to enlist and claimed that he had conscientious objections to military service and chose to remain in prison.⁶⁷² Unlike the United Kingdom, Newfoundland's Military Service Act did not offer exemption for conscientious objection and Berkley remained in prison until the Governor released him at the end of the war.⁶⁷³

Poor record keeping by the Justice Department makes it impossible to tell how many men the Constabulary arrested for refusing to report after receiving draft papers. Government records indicate that John Peddle and Matthew Ryder were also arrested for defaulting, however, after spending some time in prison, both men agreed that they would rather enlist than spend several years in Her Majesty's penitentiary.⁶⁷⁴ While it is impossible to tell how many men refused to buy into the rhetoric that his masculinity was determined by his ability to perform military service, the cases of the Taylor brothers, Peddle, Ryder, and Berkley shows that at least some men refused to accept wartime

⁶⁷¹ C.A. Harris to P.J. Summers, 24 August 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1918 Despatch 837; and C.A. Harris to Superintendent of Her Majesty's Penitentiary, 1 September 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1918 Despatch 837.

⁶⁷² P.J. Summers to C.A. Harris, 16 November 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1918 Despatch 1133.

⁶⁷³ C.A. Harris to Superintendent of Her Majesty's Penitentiary, 19 November 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1918 Despatch 1133.

⁶⁷⁴ P.J. Summers to C.A. Harris, 3 September 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1918 Despatch 1133; and P.J. Summers to C.A. Harris, 16 November 1918, PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1918 Despatch 1133.

conceptions of masculinity and were willing to face jail time in order to stand up for their principles.

Conclusion

Despite the efforts of Newfoundland's recruiters, by 1918 the Voluntary Recruiting system failed as it did not provide enough soldiers to fill the ranks of the Newfoundland Regiment. Many people viewed the withdrawal of the Regiment from the field and its subsequent posting to guard duty at Haig's headquarters as a profound national shame as many Newfoundlanders believed the Regiment was proof that Newfoundlanders were ideal specimens of British masculinity. To rectify this situation, the government of Newfoundland introduced the Military Service Act, which allowed them to force young men into service. The supporters of this bill argued that it was necessary to ensure that both the government and the men of Newfoundland lived up to the expectations of male citizens in a British Dominion at war.

Despite the power wielded by recruiters who sought to redefine British masculinity to prioritize militarism as a key component of manliness, there were those in Newfoundland who resisted this. William Coaker maintained that a Newfoundland Regiment was a costly endeavour that the Dominion could not afford. Low recruiting rates in rural Newfoundland may have indicated a resistance to recruiting propaganda, however, it is unclear whether rural were apathetic to the war effort or economically could not afford to enlist. During the debates over conscription, several newspapers editors attempted to speak out against conscription but were silenced by the government's use of the War Measures Act to censor them. Similarly, there was some rioting in opposition to the Conscription Act in Northern

Newfoundland, however, the War Measures Act ensured that little evidence of this was left for historians.

During the First World War, citizens and the liberal state negotiated a new wartime social covenant. The prime characteristic of this new covenant was a renegotiated conception of masculinity that resulted in the loss of men's liberty through conscription. The imposition of conscription was perhaps the biggest wartime alteration to the philosophy of the liberal state. Before the war, the liberal order praised the liberty of the individual above all else. During the war, however, the Newfoundland government decided that the liberty of the individual took a backseat to the needs of the war effort. In response for the sacrifices of lives and liberty, the citizens of Newfoundland expected the government to take a greater role in the lives of everyday citizens to ensure the people could cope with the conditions created by the war effort.

Chapter 7: Women's War Work

Introduction

On 31 August 1914, Lady Margaret Davidson announced the formation of the Women's Patriotic Association (WPA), whose mandate was to "arrange for the providing of necessary articles for the sick and wounded, and also for those who are going to the front to uphold the honour of Newfoundland in defense of the Empire."⁶⁷⁵ Davidson held the inaugural meeting of the WPA at the British Hall in St. John's and was greeted by a massive turnout of over 700 women who wished to support the war effort. Lady Davidson addressed her audience:

Let me first say how very glad I am to welcome you all here to-day and to see how many have responded to my appeal – an appeal, which I verily believe was not necessary – for I am convinced that it was only a call that was required – and you were all waiting ready to respond. I felt sure that there were many wishing to work to do something for our brave soldiers and sailors, who are risking their very lives for us, and who yet did not know the best ways of helping or what the needs of those at the front might be. That this is a unique time, when we are required to make personal sacrifices, such as we have never thought or dreamt of before, there can be no doubt. It is the best we can do for those who are enduring daily hardships, and giving their health and their strength for our beloved Empire... All of the best kind of men either volunteered, or if they only realized how desperate the situation was would volunteer and I feel sure will still do so – and it is the duty of us women to cheer them on and encourage them to go. I do feel so very strongly... I do feel the call to arms very strongly – and the call comes to us women just as much to do our duty, and there are many ways in which we can and should answer it.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷⁵ "Ladies' Patriotic Movement," *Evening Telegram*, 1 September 1914.

⁶⁷⁶ "Ladies' Patriotic Movement," *Evening Telegram*, 1 September 1914.

Little did Margaret Davidson know that the organization she just started, the Women's Patriotic Association, would radically alter conceptions of gender in wartime Newfoundland.

Before analyzing women's war work, it would be helpful to have a brief understanding of women's work in Newfoundland. Perhaps the best work on women's labour in Newfoundland is Marilyn Porter's "'She Was Skipper of the Shore Crew:' Notes on the Sexual Division of Labour in Newfoundland" from *Labour/Le Travail*. Porter examines the historical construction of the gendered division of labour in Newfoundland. She notes that while much of women's domestic labour was the same as other women in North America and Europe, women's involvement in the Newfoundland fisheries was unique.⁶⁷⁷ This work often involved overseeing or participating in the gutting, splitting, and curing of fish. Porter points out that this work was important as it converted a raw resource into a marketable product. If the end product was poorly cured than it would receive a lower grade and fetch less money from the merchant. While the economic impact of women's work could amount to half of a household income, Porter points out that their husbands and fathers never publicly attributed this work to women.⁶⁷⁸

In *Creating this Place: Women, Family, and Class in St. John's, 1900-1950*, a collection edited by Marilyn Porter, the authors examine the powerful role that women played in creating Newfoundland and Labrador. The authors of this collection show that women were active in both public and private life in Newfoundland. A common theme that

⁶⁷⁷ Marilyn Porter, "'She Was Skipper of the Shore Crew' Notes on the Sexual Division of Labour in Newfoundland," *Labour/Le Travail*, 15 (1985): 115.

⁶⁷⁸ Porter, "Skipper of the Shore Crew," 116.

runs through these essays is that men rarely gave women public credit for their role in creation of community life in Newfoundland.⁶⁷⁹

Women's Work and Women's Suffrage at the Beginning of the War

At the outset of the war, coverage of women's suffrage was overwhelmingly negative. Newspapers bombarded the people of Newfoundland with articles and news cables covering the suffrage movement in Britain and the activities of Emmeline Pankhurst (founder of the Women's Franchise League) and other "militant suffragettes." Editorials vilified British suffragettes on a daily basis as newspapers, particularly the *Mail and Advocate*, published sensationalized accounts of suffragist assaults, arson, and bombings.⁶⁸⁰ These articles continuously sought to delegitimize suffrage by portraying suffragettes as irrational extremists.

In April of 1914, for example, the *Twillingate Sun* published an article arguing against women's voting rights. William Temple opined their right to vote would be of little value to women because they would naturally vote the same as their husbands did, simply doubling the number of total votes.⁶⁸¹ Temple also argued that being able to vote would not give women any more power. He said that while men boast about their superiority as the "stronger sex," "woman gave him birth, woman fed him at her breast, woman nursed him through his weaker years, taught him during childhood, watched him to manhood,

⁶⁸⁰ "Dastardly attack on Aged Peer," *Mail and Advocate*, 19 February 1914; "Arson Squad Busy Again," *Mail and Advocate*, 12 March 1914; "Suffragette Battle at Buckingham Palace," *Evening Telegram*, 22 May 1914; and "Militant has Bomb for Court," *Mail and Advocate*, 25 July 1914

⁶⁸¹ "To Vote or Not to Vote," *Twillingate Sun*, 4 April 1914.

married him then and managed his home, bore his children and successors, and nurse him when he was ill.”⁶⁸² In Temple’s mind, women’s power derived from the labour in the private sphere, therefore giving them rights in the public sphere would lend them no additional power.

While some articles attacked suffrage directly, others undermined women’s suffrage by portraying women as incapable of making an informed decision. In May of 1914, the *Mail and Advocate*, published a poem titled “Just Like a Woman”:

She had been through school and
 College
 And could write herself A. B.;
 She had studied a profession,
 Which had added an M.D.
 She had dwelt in college settlement
 And had clear decided view

 On political developments,
 And she read the daily news.
 But still she remained all feminine
 Despite acquired lore –
 She could never meet a woman
 Without noting all she wore.⁶⁸³

This poem attacks suffrage by suggesting that although women could gain an education and become experts in politics and current affairs, they could never truly escape their femininity and obsession with aesthetics.

⁶⁸² “To Vote or Not to Vote,” *Twillingate Sun*, 4 April 1914.

⁶⁸³ “Just Like a Woman,” *Mail and Advocate*, 8 May 1914.

To further cement the attack on the suffrage movement, the *Mail and Advocate* also published a cartoon on the same page titled “Helpful.” This cartoon depicted two upper-class women, one of which was reading a magazine. The woman reading declares “These magazines are so helpful.” “What’s the latest?” asked the other woman. The first woman responded: “Here is the home hints they tell you how to make a lovely suffragette bomb out of an old tomato can.”⁶⁸⁴ This cartoon makes a negative association between women’s literacy, voting rights, and extremist violence.



Figure 5: *Mail and Advocate*, 8 May 1914.

The *Evening Telegram* also published poems that attacked the suffrage movement. On 22 June, for instance, the *Evening Telegram*, published a poem, which ridiculed women who wanted to vote:

The suffrage dames who play their games just like the whiskered fellers, who bravely stand and make demand for votes are the city dwellers. The squawky ones behind the guns have homes that need attention; they run outdoors, neglecting chores too numerous to mention. The city wife an idle life of ease and sloth is leading no more she makes the ginger cakes, no more the dough she’s kneading; she pulls with vim her husband’s limb for rhino for her spending, and spends her days in useless ways, in foolish schemes unending. The farmer’s fraus have hens and cows to keep them sane and busy; they fix the coops no give three whoops for movements vain and dizzy. They sell their ducks and earn some bucks to buy ten yards of gingham; they henfruit sell and husband well the money it will bring ‘em. The farmers wives lead useful lives, and not an hour is wasted; the city ways, the

⁶⁸⁴ “Helpful,” *Mail and Advocate*, 8 May 1914.

slothful days, they have not learned or tasted. They drive to town in modest gown behind old Prince and Polly, with cash to spare, and do not care for votes or other folly.⁶⁸⁵

The author of this poem associated the suffrage movement with several unrelated phenomena. First, the author argued that suffrage was an urban phenomenon and was not present outside of the city. By associating suffrage with urban life, he was drawing on an idea that was present in Britain since the beginning of industrialization, namely that urban life was causing a decline in both morality and health. Secondly, the author implied that women who campaigned for voting rights were doing so at the expense of their families. The author claimed that not only would women's suffrage be a threat to the family but to the entire patriarchal structure of western society.

Despite the profoundly negative press coverage of the suffrage movement prior to the war, anti-suffrage articles ended when the war began. The absence of wartime coverage of the suffrage movement was due to the cessation of political activities by many suffrage organizations. The largest suffrage organization in the United Kingdom, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, led by Millicent Fawcett, agreed to a cessation of political activities for the duration of the war and the most militant organization, the Women's Social and Political Union, led by Emmeline Pankhurst, agreed to end all militant activity. In the absence of political and military suffrage activity, newspapers instead focused on covering the patriotic activities of the Women's Patriotic Association.

⁶⁸⁵ Helpful," *Evening Telegram*, 8 May 1914.

The Women's Patriotic Association

Once Margaret Davidson had established the Women's Patriotic Association (WPA), the organization spread rapidly across Newfoundland. Two weeks after Davidson's announcement 26 branches had been set up across the island.⁶⁸⁶ Wasting little time, the WPA set to work on making comfort items to send to soldiers on the front lines and in hospital. Desiring a standardized quality of product, the WPA sent patterns and instructions to each branch. When items arrived at the central office in St. John's, the St. John's Branch inspected them for quality.

Initially, the WPA focused on items of clothing that would complement soldiers' issued uniforms. This clothing would make life easier and more comfortable for soldiers on the front lines and in hospitals. By October of 1914, the WPA had sent two shipments for the war effort. These shipments were destined for the front lines, British hospitals, and to the Newfoundland Regiment. While there were many branches outside St. John's, the center for women's war work in Newfoundland was at Government House. Here the WPA converted two bedrooms that Mary Brehm and her Cutting Committee used four days a week as cutting rooms. Once the pieces were cut, they would be assembled in the ballroom which was used a sewing room on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. The WPA also had a stock room at Government House where they kept wool and other fabrics that would be sent to various branches so work could be done across the island.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸⁶ "Women's Patriotic Association," *Daily News*, 15 September 1914.

⁶⁸⁷ Mabel LeMessurier, "A Visit to the Headquarters of the W.P.A.," *The Distaff*, 1917, CNS.

The efficient system set up by the WPA allowed them to send a tremendous amount of material to the front lines. In October of 1914, they sent their second shipment, which comprised 34 cases: 26 went to the front lines, four went to British hospitals, and four went directly to the Newfoundland Regiment. This shipment comprised 5,276 pairs of socks, 726 day-shirts, 473 pairs of mittens, 454 handkerchiefs, 440 pillow slips, 272 nightshirts, 164 pillows, 120 pairs of cuffs, 110 sets of pajamas, 100 body belts, 76 helmets, 30 bed jackets, 24 pairs of bed socks, 9 scarfs, 7 pairs of underwear, and 6 pairs of surgical socks.⁶⁸⁸

In addition to clothing, the WPA also formed a Red Cross branch to produce medical supplies for the war effort. Over 50 women met twice at the house of Adelaide Browning in order to produce supplies such as bandages, sterilized swabs, dressings, and other various medical supplies.⁶⁸⁹ Trained nurses supervised the workers of the WPA who also worked with Newfoundland's St. John Ambulance brigade. One particularly valuable contribution made by the WPA was production of sterile dressings. During a visit to England, Margaret Davidson toured several hospitals. During one of these tours, a hospital administrator told Davidson that there was a desperate shortage of sphagnum moss that was crucial for making dressings. Upon her return to Newfoundland, Davidson requested that women across Newfoundland collect the moss and send it to St. John's. They received so much sphagnum moss that it took ten women two days to sort and store it all.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁸ Women's Patriotic Association Minute Book of General Committee, 17 October 1914, PANL, MG 635.1.

⁶⁸⁹ Adelaide Browning, "The Red Cross," *The Distaff*, 1916, CNS.

⁶⁹⁰ Women's Patriotic Association Minute Book of General Committee, 14 May 1917, PANL, MG 635.1.

Due to their extreme dedication and their efficient system and distribution of work, the women of the WPA produced tremendous amounts of goods for the war effort. In May of 1916, John Anderson (owner of Anderson and Lumsden, a dry goods business) gave a report to the Legislative Council tallying the total amount of material that the WPA produced for the war effort in the first two years of the war. This included: 28,602 dressings; 23,284 pairs of socks; 9,090 bandages; 3,104 pairs of mitts; 2,833 flannel shirts; 1,991 pillow cases; 1,614 handkerchiefs; 1,130 mufflers; 1,020 swabs; 970 night-shirts; 791 sewing kits; 727 cholera belts; 683 pillows; 428 binders; 357 pyjamas; 143 balaclava helmets; 197 surgical socks; 200 rifle covers; 200 scarves; 199 pneumonia jackets; 63 bed jackets; 24 bed socks; 491 flannel shirts; and 8 sheets. Anderson told the Legislative Council that it was difficult to calculate just how large the WPA's contribution was to the Allied war effort but he estimated that the financial cost of all this material would be well over \$250,000.⁶⁹¹ Despite the occasional difficulty in obtaining funds to carry out their work, the Women's Patriotic Association maintained this level of production until the end of the war. While the Women's Patriotic Association became famous for the large amount of socks they sent to Allied soldiers, it is clear that their contributions to the war effort amounted to more than just making soldiers comfortable. By sending large quantities of medical equipment such as bandages and dressings, the WPA were taking an active role in saving the lives of soldiers fighting for the British Empire.

In addition to the production of clothing and medical equipment, the WPA also raised funds to send the Newfoundland Regiment comfort items that would make their time

⁶⁹¹ Journal of the Legislative Council, 3 May 1916.

in the trenches a little less awful. In December 1915, for example, the WPA raised enough funds to send a Christmas parcel to each soldier of the Newfoundland Regiment. Each box contained Christmas pudding, a pound of chocolate, a pound of gingerbread, a pound of raisins, one pipe, a plug of tobacco, warm underwear, and a pair of socks.⁶⁹² These parcels were sent to the War Contingent Association who forwarded them on to Newfoundlanders on the beaches of Gallipoli.

Public Perceptions of the Women's Patriotic Association

The Women's Patriotic Association worked tirelessly to send a host of medical supplies, clothing, and comfort items to the Newfoundland Regiment and other Allied soldiers, but it is unclear how the Newfoundland public reacted to its work. Several historians have examined women's war work in Newfoundland, including the Women's Patriotic Association, Nurses and Voluntary Aid Detachment workers (VADs) but these scholars have not examined the public's reaction to this work.⁶⁹³ This section will examine how the public perceived and reacted to the work of the WPA.

Immediately following Davidson's announcement that she would be forming a Women's Patriotic Association; the *Daily News* published an article titled "Women Workers" that praised the patriotism of the WPA:

The work of the Women's Patriotic Association is a work for Empire that is being shared wherever the grand old flag is flying; amongst the workers being British

⁶⁹² "Xmas Gifts for Ours," *Mail and Advocate*, 4 December 1915.

⁶⁹³ For more on women's war work see: Margot Duley, "The Unquiet Knitters of Newfoundland: From Mothers of the Regiment to Mothers of the Nation"; and Terry Bishop-Stirling, "Such Sights One Will Never Forget": Newfoundland and Overseas Nursing in the First World War," in *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland during the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012).

women of all classes, including the Queen and the Queen mother. We rejoice to that the local association is taking the broader view and that its efforts are not to be confined to our own brave volunteers alone. What is needed for our lads will be gladly done; but the aim is to help other lads as well. The Empire to-day is one large family, her sons and daughters are working in a common cause; there are no parties now; no conflicting interests, no sections, no classes. Men are standing shoulder to shoulder as brothers; women know nothing of the limitations of rank or fortunes but are working together as sisters for the beloved family, whose peace and progress has been rudely disturbed by the insensate ambition and bloodlust of a vanity-crazed tyrant. Lady Davidson in her address has given wise counsel. The sons of Newfoundland are responding nobly to the call; and her daughters are doing the same. It may be true enough that "men must work and must weep," but the antidote to sadness, service. At the close of the meeting the roll was signed by 500 women, recruits in the Army of Service, ready to devote time and skill and patience and means for home and throne and Empire; and for the comfort and assistance of their husbands, brothers and sons at the Front.⁶⁹⁴

It seems that the *Daily News*' praise for the WPA was rooted in the organization's public display of patriotism. The WPA's patriotism reinforced the social underpinnings of the war effort by fostering imperial unity, class unity, and solidarity with the rest of the Empire. In a time of great anxiety and uncertainty, the WPA suggested that no matter how dangerous the war was, all elements of the British Empire would stand together.

In a speech she gave at a meeting of the Current Events Club in St. John's, Margaret Davidson addressed the solidarity of the WPA with the men fighting in the trenches. She stated that the war had the world holding their collective breath in anxiety and that every man and woman had a duty to provide whatever service the Empire asked of them. She said that it was understandable that women wanted to go to the front so they could be close to the action. Despite this desire, Davidson said that a woman's duty was at home supporting enlisted men. In order to demonstrate just how much was at stake in the war,

⁶⁹⁴ Women's Patriotic Association Minute Book of General Committee, 1 September 1914, PANL, MG 635.1.

Davidson reminded her audience that if Germany were to win the war, they would certainly wish to annex Newfoundland, strip away all British freedoms, conscript men into the German Army and ship them away to defend other German colonial possessions.⁶⁹⁵

In another meeting, Davidson urged the women of the Ladies Reading Room to do everything they could to help win the war. She told them that there were several ways for women to help end the war: working with the WPA to send valuable material to the war effort; ensuring that rural Newfoundland was made aware of the grave threat that Germany posed to the Dominion; and educating children about how wonderful it was to be a British citizen and how terrible it would be if Germany won the war.⁶⁹⁶ This speech highlighted a very important aspect of the WPAs work during the war. The women of the WPA did not see their work as providing “comforts” to soldiers. They understood that socks, clothing, and medical supplies were more than just comforts and knew that their work would help to win the war and keep Newfoundland safe from Germany.

Throughout the war, war work was an effective way for women to make public displays of patriotism, sacrifice, and service. Newspapers often publicized stories of women’s sacrifice and service, applauding them for their patriotism. For instance, the *Daily News* ran an article highlighting a widow’s contribution to the war effort. The article described the situation of an anonymous widow living in northern Newfoundland, who lost her husband and dedicated her life to raising her two daughters. By the time the war had broken out, one of the woman’s daughters had gotten married and the other was a “partial invalid,” and relied on her mother for support. With the financial burden of a physically

⁶⁹⁵ “Women’s Work in Relation to War,” *Daily News*, 27 November 1914.

⁶⁹⁶ “Women’s Work in Relation to War,” *Daily News*, 27 November 1914.

disabled daughter, the woman was unable to donate to the WPA. Despite this, the woman had two sheep that she sheared, spun the wool into yarn, knit the yarn into socks, and donated those to the WPA. The editor of the *Daily News* applauded her sacrifice:

She hath done what she could, and unconsciously, has taught a lesson to thousands. Newfoundland has reason to be proud of her manly volunteers; and she has equal reason to rejoice in the devotion displayed by her daughters, foremost amongst whom must rank this noble woman, who out of her poverty, has enriched the service and patriotism of the land.⁶⁹⁷

By comparing women's war work to the service of soldiers, who society held as ideal British citizens, and intimating that people should be equally proud of the WPA, the editor showed just how valued the WPA was in Newfoundland.⁶⁹⁸

W.F. Lloyd, the editor of the *Evening Telegram*, also praised the WPA. In an article from 1914, Lloyd stated that "there is nothing which has occurred since the outbreak of the war more inspiring and gratifying than the whole-hearted way in which the Daughters of Newfoundland have risen in their strength to do 'their bit' to help along those fighting for King and Country."⁶⁹⁹ Lloyd demonstrated particular pride in the recognition that the WPA received from Major-General J.C. Dalton, Chief Commissioner of the Brigade Overseas, who oversaw branches of St. John Ambulance across the British Empire.⁷⁰⁰ Referring to the WPA, Dale said "I am amazed to find such a noble list, though not surprised, because I know that there is practically no limit to the loyalty and patriotism of the Dominions; and

⁶⁹⁷ "A Widow's Patriotism," *Daily News*, 7 December 1914.

⁶⁹⁸ It is unclear if this story is factually accurate. Regardless of the historical accuracy of this story, it is clear that the *Daily News* sought to highlight and foster pride in women's patriotism.

⁶⁹⁹ "Inspiring Work of the Women of Nfld," *Evening Telegram*, 17 December 1914.

⁷⁰⁰ Arthur Dale, *First Aid: The Independent Journal for the Ambulance and Nursing Services*, August 1913. https://issuu.com/museumoftheorderofstjohn/docs/first_aid_1912-1914, accessed 28 May 1918.

that you will certainly do more than your share to help the Old Country in her difficulties.”⁷⁰¹ This acknowledgement from the British leadership of St. John Ambulance was incredibly powerful. Like the activities of the Newfoundland Regiment, the work of the WPA proved that Newfoundland was a loyal Dominion, doing everything it could to help the British Empire.

By reading editorials from Newfoundland newspapers, it becomes clear that many people in the Dominion were proud of the WPA’s work. While some believed the WPA focused its efforts on providing comfort to soldiers overseas, many in the Dominion believed that the contributions of the WPA were critical to the success of the Newfoundland Regiment. In January of 1915, an uncredited woman from the WPA published an article, which refuted the claim that the WPA only focused on sending comforts to soldiers, the sick, and the wounded. Instead, the author argued that the WPA were providing lifesaving equipment to many allied soldiers. In this article, the author included a letter from Ethel Perrot from St. John Ambulance in Britain, thanking the Women’s Patriotic Association for the clothing they sent:

I write on behalf of the committee to thank the Women of the Patriotic Association of Newfoundland for the perfectly splendid consignment of clothing and comforts received. It came just in time to enable me to have the pleasure of announcing this most generous gift to the Queen’s Committee of ladies, and I am desirous to express their thanks to the ladies of Newfoundland for their generosity, which will add very largely to the grand total. Their gift has come just at the moment when we were badly needing garments to send off to the wounded at the Front. I cannot tell you how grateful we are for this most generous gift, and I hope you will convey to the ladies of our association, and to Lady Davidson our most grateful thanks.

I might say that only a few days ago, a most urgent telegram came from the British Consul at Dunkirk, asking that warm clothing should be immediately dispatched. These were got off in two hours, and two days later a telegram was received saying

⁷⁰¹ “Inspiring Work of the Women of Nfld,” *Evening Telegram*, 17 December 1914.

“Most grateful thanks for the generous gift of warm clothing received, which was the means of saving valuable lives.” Such telegrams as this encourage us to go on giving and donating our utmost, and indeed Newfoundland has come forward at the very moment to enable us to keep up our stock and supply the tremendous need. [Your] first consignment will be sent to the troops in the fighting line near Boulogne...⁷⁰²

Perrot’s letter, stating that clothing donated by patriotic associations was a crucial tool for saving the lives of soldiers on the frontlines, was powerful evidence that the contributions of the WPA were important to the allied war effort, and not merely comforts.

In the *Daily News*, John Robinson also championed the importance of the WPA, particularly for the socks they were sending to the front. Robinson asked his readers to think about the soldiers in the trenches, hurriedly darning socks, washing them in stagnant pools of water, and putting them back on wet. He stated that an ample supply of socks would not only prevent soldiers from the needless suffering but having dry, comfortable socks would make the soldiers more efficient and better able to fight the Germans. Robinson declared that homemade socks were far superior to factory made socks and the Newfoundland Regiment immediately needed 1200 pairs and a reserve of 1200 pairs to replace them as need be.⁷⁰³

The *Twillingate Sun* also stressed the importance of socks to the war effort. William Temple dispelled rumors that socks donated by the WPA were sold to allied soldiers, instead of given to them freely.⁷⁰⁴ To show how grateful soldiers were for these socks, Temple published a letter received by the WPA from a French soldier, named Honore Hamel who received a pair of their socks. The soldier wrote: “I am the man who received

⁷⁰² “The Work of the WPA,” *Daily News*, 20 January 1915.

⁷⁰³ “Socks,” *Daily News*, 3 February 1915.

⁷⁰⁴ “What Happens to Socks,” *Twillingate Sun*, 23 January 1915.

the socks, for which I heartily thank you, for I was in great need of them, and was very happy to have received them.”⁷⁰⁵ Temple praised the work of the WPA for so promptly getting much needed clothing to soldiers who needed it.

The crucial role that the WPA played in the performance of the Newfoundland Regiment left them vulnerable to criticisms from those who thought they were not doing enough to support the soldiers. In January of 1915, a persistent rumour began to surface that the soldiers of the Newfoundland Regiment were not being issued enough clothing. John St. John claimed to have received word from soldiers training in Scotland that they only received two pairs of socks and one pair of boots that quickly wore out, leaving them improperly equipped to carry out their training. He argued that the WPA and NPA needed to immediately ensure the men were issued socks and boots. St. John attacked the NPA and WPA saying that it was the least they could do for the soldiers, who were risking their lives for their country, to ensure that “they are not compelled to wear socks with the heels and toes in tatters, and shoes with the soles gone.”⁷⁰⁶

Rumours that the WPA neglected the Newfoundland regiment reached their pinnacle in November of 1915, when the *Mail and Advocate* published a letter from an anonymous soldier at Gallipoli. The soldier accused the WPA of not sending any clothing or comforts to Regiment soldiers at Gallipoli. He complained that the weather in Gallipoli was exacerbated by the complete lack of clothing they had: “What we suffered from cold this past week nobody knows, only those men who went through it. It was not only cold by night but also by day. We have no drawers or shirts as we were told we did not need them.”

⁷⁰⁵ “What Happens to Socks,” *Twillingate Sun*, 23 January 1915.

⁷⁰⁶ “Our Soldiers Abroad,” *Mail and Advocate*, 9 January 1915.

He further griped that 5th Battalion of the Royal Scots had received ample supplies of cigarettes, tobacco, oatmeal, and chocolate, while the Newfoundland Regiment received nothing. This soldier accused them of being generous to British and French soldiers while their “own flesh and blood go bare.” He was so outraged that he claimed the alleged lack of support from the WPA was “enough to make one disgusted with everything Newfoundland, and ashamed of his own country.”⁷⁰⁷

The accusations of neglect by this anonymous soldier sent shockwaves through Newfoundland. John St. John was one of the first newspaper editors to speak out against the Women’s Patriotic Association. He demanded to know why the WPA had sent \$250,000 worth of goods, which the WPA raised through public donations, to London while Newfoundlanders were suffering on Turkish shores. St. John insisted that the WPA explain why they were sending clothing to British and French soldiers while Newfoundlanders had nothing and further requested that the government conduct a formal investigation into the matter. He insisted that the “W.P.A. attend to the requirements of our Newfoundland Regiment before helping others who are likely well looked after by English ladies,” and that a public meeting be held to establish a new committee to rectify the “blundering and negligence.”⁷⁰⁸

In response to the *Mail and Advocate*’s attack on the WPA, the editor of the *Daily News* responded by pointing out that all necessary clothing was issued to the soldiers by the British Army and that the WPA had sent a recent resupply of addition clothing to the soldiers. St. John was not convinced. He replied to the *Daily News*, asserting that while the

⁷⁰⁷ “The W.P.A.,” *Mail and Advocate*, 30 November 1915.

⁷⁰⁸ “The W.P.A.,” *Mail and Advocate*, 30 November 1915.

WPA may have sent clothing, it was clear that they had not sent any comfort items and in failing to do so brought shame to the Dominion.⁷⁰⁹ In an attempt to discredit the WPA, St. John highlighted the comforts of those at home with the suffering of the trenches:

We are taking it easy, enjoying ourselves and living just the same as though no war existed but the 2500 lads who volunteered and the 100 Naval Reservists who protect Britain's interests in the North Sea, who risk life and limb hourly and are experiencing all sorts of discomforts and enduring all sorts of suffering and hardships must have their little comforts attended to, or Newfoundland citizens will be ashamed to face those who will live to return after the war.⁷¹⁰

The *Mail and Advocate's* outrage at the WPA's alleged neglect show that many in Newfoundland viewed the WPA's work as an essential element of the war effort and more than simple comforts. In many ways the criticism of the WPA was similar to the criticism levelled against men who refused to enlist.

Following the publication of the *Mail and Advocate's* attacks against the WPA, readers inundated the newspaper with letters to the editor condemning the Women's Patriotic Association. "Teacher" praised St. John for having the conviction to point out the deficiencies of the WPA. He demanded to know where the thousands of items of clothing had gone and if they were sent to Canadian and French soldiers. Another letter by "Parent" argued that when parents sent their sons to fight, they assumed that they would be looked after by clothing and comforts sent by the WPA, however, now they were learning that none was sent. "Parent" demanded an investigation to determine why the WPA sent clothing and comforts to Canadians, Belgians, French, and the British while Newfoundland soldiers had none.⁷¹¹ A letter by "Truth" demanded to know what happened to all the funds

⁷⁰⁹ "The W.P.A.," *Mail and Advocate*, 1 December 1915.

⁷¹⁰ "The W.P.A.," *Mail and Advocate*, 1 December 1915.

⁷¹¹ "Backs Up Our Demands for a Public Meeting," *Mail and Advocate*, 2 December 1915.

that the WPA raised and demanded a public meeting to prevent this “injustice” from happened again.⁷¹²

In the face of the serious criticism by the *Mail and Advocate*, the Women’s Patriotic Association provided a response in the form of a letter to the editor. Adelaide Browning penned a letter to the *Mail and Advocate*. She told St. John that the *Advocate*’s attack on the WPA was an attack on all women in Newfoundland. Browning pointed out that the Newfoundland Regiment received the basic clothing they needed from the War Office, and the WPA ensured that the Newfoundland Regiment had replacements for any clothes that were worn out by the tremendous wear and tear and loss on the battlefield.⁷¹³ She reminded the *Mail and Advocate* that it was in the best interest of the War Office and the staff of the Newfoundland Regiment to ensure that all soldiers were properly equipment to fight.

In addition to tearing down the argument that the WPA was the reason that Newfoundland soldiers were supposedly poorly equipped, Browning also attacked the soldier who wrote the letter:

Reading the letter closely this boy seems to want tobacco and chocolate. It has been mentioned that those in command preferred that no chocolate be sent to the Dardanelles, as there is such difficulty in providing a sufficient supply of water, and it makes the soldiers suffer so much more from thirst. It is unfortunate that this peevish, jealous, unmanly letter should have been printed, for it gives people a very impression from what we would wish them to have of the Newfoundland Contingents. And that anyone could pen such comments on the W.P.A. as written in last night’s paper is beyond belief.⁷¹⁴

Browning concluded her letter by expressing gratitude that the majority of soldiers were intelligent and conscientious enough to realize everything the WPA was doing for them.

⁷¹² “Backs Up Our Demands for a Public Meeting,” *Mail and Advocate*, 2 December 1915.

⁷¹³ “Letter from Mrs. Browning,” *Mail and Advocate*, 2 December 1915.

⁷¹⁴ “Letter from Mrs. Browning,” *Mail and Advocate*, 2 December 1915.

Despite her attempts to win favour for the WPA, Adelaide Browning's letter did more harm than good. The day after the *Mail and Advocate* published Browning's letter, they published a reply written by "An Indignant Mother." Indignant Mother said that it was not a matter of how much clothing or comforts the WPA made but if these things reached their intended recipients: The Newfoundland Regiment. She also chided Browning for suggesting this brave soldier was peevish, jealous, and unmanly and accused Browning of being uncharitable and unladylike.⁷¹⁵

An anonymous member of the Women's Patriotic Association also criticized the Browning's response. This WPA member, from Port Blandford, expressed outrage that she would blame clothing shortages on an individual soldier. She attacked Browning's argument that the War Office fully provided for each soldier, asking "if this is so, why is it that our W.P.A. are always making so much preparations for the comforts of our boys at the front?"⁷¹⁶ She also defended the soldier, saying that he had the courage to speak out about the shortcomings in the work of the WPA so that the people could make things right.

Despite the harsh attacks on the WPA by the editor of the *Mail and Advocate* and its readers, not all were convinced that the women of the WPA were failing to provide for the Newfoundland Regiment. At the height of this controversy, the *Western Star* called on its readers to increase donations to the WPA. The editor told his readers that the soldiers needed warm clothing to get them through the winter: "While you and I are sitting by our firesides enjoying the comforts of house and home, these men will be sailing the wintry seas or enduring the hardships of frost and snow in the battle trenches of Europe." The

⁷¹⁵ "A Reply to Mrs. Browning," *Mail and Advocate*, 3 December 1915.

⁷¹⁶ "Doesn't Agree with Letter from Mrs. Browning," *Mail and Advocate*, 14 December 1915.

editor then proceed to defend the WPA saying that they had “done nobley towards providing comforts for our soldiers and sailor lads,” but required addition funds if they were going to keep up their important work.⁷¹⁷

The *Daily News*, a zealous advocate of the WPA, also defended the group. Robinson argued that if the WPA was not able to send enough clothing and comforts for the Regiment, it was not a failing on their part but a failure of the people of Newfoundland to make sufficient donations to the WPA. The *Daily News* rebuked those who would criticize the WPA and argued that they should praising them. Robinson further declared that “no organization in the world is doing better work, or more useful, than the Women’s Patriotic Association,” and he urged every person in the Dominion to fully support the WPA as they ceaselessly work for the soldiers, the sick, and the wounded at the front.⁷¹⁸

The *Daily News* and *Western Star* were not the only organizations who came to the defence of the Women’s Patriotic Association. On 2 December 1915, Governor Davidson wrote a letter on behalf of himself and Prime Minister Morris to Arthur Steel-Maitland, Chairman of the Newfoundland War Contingent Association.⁷¹⁹ Davidson told him that both he and the Prime Minister agreed that the complaints about that WPA were without merit. He dismissed these complaints as exaggerated accounts of young soldiers that were written to impress their mothers. Davidson told Steel-Maitland that he could actively refute the accusations made against the WPA, but animosity toward them had already taken root

⁷¹⁷ “Winter Comforts for our Soldiers in the Trenches,” *Western Star*, 1 December 1915.

⁷¹⁸ “The Work of the WPA,” *Daily News*, 8 December 1915.

⁷¹⁹ The Newfoundland War Contingent Association was a volunteer organization which looked after the sick, wounded, soldiers on furlough in Britain, or POWs in enemy countries. Arthur Steel-Maitland was the chairman, and the majority of the Association’s members were either born in Newfoundland or had lived in Newfoundland.

in northern Newfoundland. Despite this, Davidson reassured Steel-Maitland that “most sensible people in the Regiment and at home realize that fighting involves hardship. Still, there is residuum (a thickish deposit at the bottom) in Newfoundland, which is prone to believe ill of those who shoulder responsibility.”⁷²⁰

In order to quell fears that the British Army was not caring for the Newfoundland Regiment, J.R. Bennett wrote a letter to the editor of the *Mail and Advocate*. Bennett’s letter included a statement from Bonar Law, about the Newfoundland Regiment’s clothing. Law assured Davidson that despite the War Office supplying the Regiment with sufficient clothing for the winter, the Newfoundland War Contingent Association had recently sent two shipments of shirts, socks, scarves, mittens and thermal underwear made by the WPA.⁷²¹ Law assured Davidson that the British Army, the WPA, and the War Contingent Association together had ensured that the Regiment was more than adequately supplied with clothing for the winter.

Henry Reeve, the Secretary of the Newfoundland War Contingent Association (NWCA) also came to the defence of the Women’s Patriotic Association. He wrote a letter to Margaret Davidson expressing frustration over accusations that Newfoundland soldiers were not getting clothing and comforts donated by the WPA. He assured Davidson that the NWCA was preparing to send the Regiment a shipment of socks, mittens, scarves, chocolate, stationary, chewing gum, cigarettes, and playing cards. Reeve told Davidson that the Newfoundland Regiment was the envy of the entire division because the WPA had

⁷²⁰ W.E. Davidson, Governor, to A. Steel-Maitland, Chairman Newfoundland War Contingent Association, 2 December 1915, PANL, GN 1/10/0.

⁷²¹ “Clothing for ‘Our’ Regiment,” *Mail and Advocate*, 11 December 1915.

sent them such lavish gifts. He ended his letter by telling Davidson that he hoped his letter could convince the people of Newfoundland that the WPA were doing an excellent job looking after the soldiers.⁷²²

The controversy surrounding the Women's Patriotic Association sheds light on how important Newfoundland believed the work of the WPA to be. On one level, this controversy is an example of a group of men (the *Mail and Advocate* and its readers) attacking a women's organization for failing to do, in their eyes, enough for the war effort. On another level the outrage over the WPA's alleged neglect shows that many in Newfoundland recognized that women's work was important, if not vital, the war effort and were outraged at the allegation that they were not completing their important work. Whether people portrayed the WPA as an organization that sent comfort items to make soldier's time in the trenches easier or as an organization that sent lifesaving medical supplies and clothing, everyone seemed to agree that the WPA played an important role in the war effort.

The outrage directed towards the WPA stemmed from a belief that every element of Newfoundland society had a role to play in the war effort. Eligible men had a duty to enlist with the Newfoundland Regiment or the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve. Men who could not enlist had a duty to donate to the NPA. Many citizens believed that women, had a duty to support Newfoundland's soldiers by encouraging men to enlist and by providing them with clothing, comforts, and medical supplies through the Women's

⁷²² "Comforts for Our Soldiers," *Mail and Advocate*, 22 November 1916.

Patriotic Association. Many were outraged when the *Mail and Advocate* alleged that the women of the WPA were shirking their duties.

The White Feather

In addition to the WPA's work in providing clothing, comforts, and medical equipment, many people believed that women played an integral part of the recruiting process by encouraging their sons, husbands, fathers, brothers, and potential suitors to enlist. The overwhelmingly male recruiters, who wanted women to apply social pressure on potential recruits, sought to enlist women to help recruit men into the Regiment and Reserve. The *Mail and Advocate* published an early example of this in September of 1914. In an article titled "The Selfish Woman," the author argued that any woman who argued they needed their husbands at home and discouraged them from enlisting was selfish for putting herself before the empire:

There is not a word of reproach intended for women who require the support of assistance of husbands or sons and who cannot therefore spare them to the country. But those who give way to an affectionate selfishness have nothing of the true spirit of patriotism, and are unworthy to stand in the ranks with the noble and self-devoted women of the nation.⁷²³

Not only did this article suggest that women must put the needs of the Empire before their own, but it also told women they had a patriotic duty to encourage men to enlist.

A writer by the name of "Chaplain" also argued women had a patriotic duty to encourage their sons and husbands to enlist. In a letter to the editor in the *Daily News*, Chaplain told the story of when he notified a mother and father that their son died when

⁷²³ "The Selfish Women," *Mail and Advocate*, 8 September 1916.

the *Viknor* sank. In response to the terrible news, the mother told her husband “Don’t cry William... let us thank god that we have another [son] to take his place in such a noble cause.”⁷²⁴ The woman’s other son was currently training on the HMS Calypso and was due to leave shortly for service on a Royal Navy vessel. Chaplain argued that the mother’s reaction was a true representation of the spirit of the Empire and filled his heart with pride and gratitude. Whether or not the mother or her interaction with Chaplain was real, it is very clear that Chaplain wanted mothers to believe it was an honour to lose a son for the Empire.

The editor of the *Daily News* responded to Chaplain in an article extolling the virtues of this mother. Robinson stated that this mother showed that Newfoundland has some of the most virtuous women in the Empire:

Not to Roman Matrons or Spartan Mothers alone belong the palm for high-souled patriotism and devotion to that State which gave them birth and protection. Nor need we go to England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, or the great Dominions to seek for Mothers and Women worthy of the best traditions of the Empire and of the race. They may be found here, in our midst, in this old City of St. John’s.⁷²⁵

Later in this article, he told the story of a mother whose five sons were fighting in the war. Three had enlisted in the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve and two were serving with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He declared that as long as there were mothers like these in the British Empire then “there will be no need to be anxious for the safety of [Britain’s] sons and daughters.”⁷²⁶ In both of these articles, by extolling the virtues of mothers whose sons were killed and by arguing that these mothers played a vital role in

⁷²⁴ “A Noble Mother,” *Daily News*, 4 February 1915.

⁷²⁵ “Mothers of Men,” *Daily News*, 4 February 1915.

⁷²⁶ “Mothers of Men,” *Daily News*, 4 February 1915.

defending the Empire, the authors were working to break down the natural desire for parents to protect their children, and telling women that they were required to sacrifice their children for the good of the Empire.

In April 1915, D. King (a resident of Bonaventure) wrote an article for the *Mail and Advocate* that argued a mother's desire to protect her children was a threat to the war effort. In this letter, King expressed his disappointment that several young men from his community tried to enlist but their mothers prevented them from doing so: 'We all know a mother's love for her children, but in a time of war, all mothers should share alike because for sure someone must fight, and fight hard to conquer our present enemy, the Germans, Austrians, and Turks.'⁷²⁷ Unlike the editor of the *Daily News*, King did not glorify soldier's mothers. Instead, he portrayed mothers as a potential stumbling block to the British war effort. Despite their differing tactics, their message was the same: for the sake of the British Empire, mothers must encourage their sons to fight.⁷²⁸

Governor Davidson also believed women had an important role to play in the recruiting effort. In December 1914, Davidson detailed the successes of the Women's Patriotic Association in his diary. He praised the WPA for spreading across the Dominion and creating a host of goods for the war effort.⁷²⁹ He also congratulated the St. John's branch of the WPA for doing their "duty manfully" by encouraging ample amounts of men to enlist with the Regiment. In comparison, Davidson noted that in branches outside St. Johns, "the women perform prodigies in the way of work but are not so far successful

⁷²⁷ "Volunteers of New Bonaventure," *Mail and Advocate*, 14 April 1915.

⁷²⁸ "Volunteers of New Bonaventure," *Mail and Advocate*, 14 April 1915.

⁷²⁹ W.E. Davidson, Personal Diary, 1 December 1914

recruiting agents.”⁷³⁰ By saying that woman had a “duty” to recruit men into the Regiment and by expressing disappointment with the ability of rural women to recruit men, Davidson made it clear that the government believed women had an important role in Newfoundland’s recruiting efforts.

Davidson publicly addressed women’s roles in recruiting when he announced the formation of the Newfoundland Forestry Battalion. In this announcement, he declared that men in the Dominion no longer had an excuse for not enlisting. He explained that the Forestry Battalion was accepting men who had failed the medical exam to join the Newfoundland Regiment, fathers who feared that their family would not be provided for in the case of their death, and conscientious objectors who refused to be a part of combat operations. Davidson urged “the Women of Newfoundland – Mothers and Wives – to let their men go – nay, to urge them to go as becomes their manhood. Do not let your men have to endure the reproach of having been tried as True Men and found wanting.”⁷³¹

Some recruiters highlighted women’s recruiting efforts to motivate men to encourage each other to enlist. In April 1918, K.M. Blair wrote an article for the *Evening Advocate* that encouraged Rejected Volunteers to do their duty and encourage other men to enlist. Blair highlighted the success of the WPA and other women’s organizations:

Are the W.P.A., the Daughters of Empire, the Khaki Guild, and the many associations of the various churches, etc., in St. John’s and throughout the Dominion working for the soldiers? Are they with the soldiers? Ask them! Are they going to see the Boys crying in vain for help? Are they going to see all their men’s sacrifices go for nought? Are they not interested in the honour of Newfoundland and their own honor, or why did they bid their men go? The war bears harder upon mothers and wives who send their men forward to the battle than upon us mere men. We have more pursuits, more business duties to take up

⁷³⁰ W.E. Davidson, Personal Diary, 1 December 1914

⁷³¹ “Appeal for Men,” *Evening Telegram*, 7 April 1917.

our minds, for them in their daily round of duties, are the long silences and quiet. But they brave it all! It has always been Woman who has been called up on more than man to make Supreme Sacrifices. Have the women of the world failed us in this great struggle? No! If anybody will fail in their duty, as we believe that the women's influence on behalf of the Regiment will be as strong as any we have in the community.⁷³²

It seems quite clear that Blair believed that women were making impressive contributions to the war effort by encouraging men to enlist. According to Blair, the women of Newfoundland convinced the men in their lives to go, even though they knew it might lead to their death, because they had the best interests of Newfoundland in their minds.

In conjunction with the efforts of male recruiters to enlist women's help in encouraging men to enlist, recruiters also called on women to shame men into enlisting. Precisely how women received this campaign was unclear as men's voices dominated historical sources such as newspaper articles, letters to the editor, and government correspondence. This meant that there is little evidence to suggest the extent that women shamed men into enlisting. What evidence does exist, suggests that there was a limited "white feather" campaign designed to encourage men to enlist.

On 29 November 1916, the H.A. Winter, editor of the *Evening Telegram* published an article encouraging women to exercise caution when sending white feathers through the mail: "The young ladies or others who sent through the mails white feathers to young men who they believed to be 'slackers' should be very careful that the young men in question were justly entitled to receive them, as we know a number of cases where quite an injustice has been done."⁷³³ While this article is certainly not evidence of a widespread white feather

⁷³² "More Particularly to the Newfoundland Rejected Volunteers," *Evening Advocate*, 16 April 1918.

⁷³³ "The White Feather," *Evening Telegram*, 29 November 1916.

campaign, it does suggest that a small group of women felt strongly enough about encouraging recruiting to send feathers that shamed men for not enlisting.

The *Evening Telegram* also received a letter from a concerned citizen writing under the pseudonym “O U Slacker.” In his letter, Slacker recounted an incident that occurred the previous night when he and three of his friends were insulted by two women as they were walking down LeMarchant Road in St. John’s.⁷³⁴ Slacker told the editor that he and his friends were walking down the road when they were passed a group of women at the same time as the women were passing a returned soldier in uniform. The women greeted the soldier politely and said “Oh, there’s some big slackers” while pointing at Slacker and his friends. The author took particular offense to these comments as he was a returned soldier with a permanent disability. His three friends had volunteered but the Regimented rejected them. Instead of insulting men, Slacker encouraged women to be constructive instead of belittling anyone not in uniform:

Before closing I should like to remind them that if they are so eager in forwarding the cause of recruiting by denouncing everyone not in khaki or blue, why not get them on a public platform and let us hear what they have to say about it. If they are not gifted with the power of eloquence, why then should they waste their energy in that direction? Why not spend an hour or so making comforts for our boys in order to relieve their suffering a wee bit, or in some other way which would be of some use to someone and not going around holding themselves up to ridicule and trying to be funny at the expense of others.⁷³⁵

Clearly, Slacker was upset by having his masculinity challenged by the women who crossed his path. His criticism went beyond the women mistaking his friends for un-enlisted men and attacked women attempting to stimulate recruiting by shaming men. Instead,

⁷³⁴ “Why Worry About Them?” *Evening Telegram*, 6 August 1917.

⁷³⁵ “Why Worry About Them?” *Evening Telegram*, 6 August 1917.

Slacker recommended these women take on traditionally feminine roles of making clothing and “comforts.”⁷³⁶

Perhaps the strongest piece of evidence of the profound affect that shaming had on men in Newfoundland was the issuing of rejected volunteer badges. E. Parsons, a People’s Party M.H.A for Harbour Grace, first brought up the idea to issue badges to men who had tried to enlist but the Newfoundland Regiment rejected. He told the house that he attended a recruiting meeting in Harbour Grace and witnessed five or six men come forward to offer their service. Despite their intentions, the Regiment found them medically unfit and turned them down. Parsons suggested that the government should issue badges to rejected volunteers to prevent men like these from the shame associated with being labelled a slacker.⁷³⁷

On 7 April 1916, in the House of Assembly, Edward Morris proposed an amendment to the Volunteer Force Bill that would allow the government to issue rejected volunteer badges to those who were exempt from volunteering or men who volunteered but were rejected because they failed the medical examination.⁷³⁸ Morris explained that offering rejected volunteer badges would be a symbol of governmental recognition the sacrifice that young men were willing to make and would also allow their peers to recognize that they were not slackers.⁷³⁹

⁷³⁶ “Why Worry About Them?” *Evening Telegram*, 6 August 1917.

⁷³⁷ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 22 March 1916.

⁷³⁸ The Government considered certain vocations critical to Newfoundland’s war effort, and they discouraged men in these positions from enlisting. Men who worked in cable stations, for example, were deemed crucial because of the vital importance of the messages they transmitted.

⁷³⁹ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 7 April 1916.

The House of Assembly received Morris's amendment well, with the exception of some concerns expressed by William Coaker. He asked Morris if every single person who offered his service would get a badge, even if the person knew he would fail the medical examination. Coaker gave the example of a man with tuberculosis who attempted to enlist, knowing the Regiment will not accept him but turned up to a recruiting station just to get a badge. He worried that there would be hundreds of men receiving badges who did not make an honest attempt at enlisting. In response, Morris told Coaker that there would be "rules and regulations" to prevent that the abuse of the badges. This satisfied Coaker.⁷⁴⁰

The House of Assembly unanimously passed the amendment to the Volunteer Force Bill on 11 April 1916 and the government began issuing rejected volunteer badges in October. The badge was made of bronze, had a map of Newfoundland in the center, the words "I have offered for King and Country" appeared on top of the map and "Newfoundland" was written underneath.⁷⁴¹ These badges were issued to any man of military age who tried to enlist and failed the regular medical examination. The Regiment would deny anyone a badge who they deemed "obviously unfit" when they turned up for enlistment.⁷⁴² The government expected recipients to treat these badges with the utmost respect. Anyone who lost or damaged their badge was subject to a fine of \$10-25. Anyone caught wearing a badge, who was not issued one, was subject to a fine of \$50.

Although this legislation pleased many who felt that rejected volunteers deserved recognition, it angered others because it did not provide badges for those who attempted to

⁷⁴⁰ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 7 April 1916.

⁷⁴¹ "The Regimental Badge," *Evening Telegram*, 3 October 1916.

⁷⁴² "1st Newfoundland Regiment," *Mail and Advocate*, 7 October 1916.

enlist in the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve. The omission of sailors from the legislation exacerbated existing tensions between the Newfoundland Regiment and the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve who often felt that the government was overlooking them. The men of the NRNR often complained that soldiers in the regiment received higher pay rates and frequently petitioned the government to augment their pay they received from the Royal Navy. In addition to this, many naval reservists felt that the public held soldiers in greater esteem. This issue became prominent in shortly after the passing of the Volunteer Force Act when two men accosted a group of naval reservists, calling them cowards for not enlisting with the Newfoundland Regiment.⁷⁴³

With these tensions in mind, the Recruiting Committee of the Newfoundland Patriotic Association met and passed a unanimous resolution calling on the government to issue rejected volunteer badges to those who Naval Reserve rejected. Following this resolution, Joseph Outerbridge wrote a letter to the Justice Minister to request that the government offer the same badges to rejected volunteers for the Naval Reserve as they offered to rejected volunteers for the Regiment.⁷⁴⁴ In response, Squires informed Outerbridge that badges could not be issued to naval reservists because the legislation passed in the House of Assembly only pertained to those tried to enlist in the Regiment. He recommended that the legislature re-examine this issue in a year when the House of Assembly reopened. Following an intervention from the Colonial Secretary, Squires changed his mind and recommended that the Legislative Council pass a minute of council allowing the government to issue badges to those who were rejected from the Naval

⁷⁴³ "Resents Insult Offered Navy," *Mail and Advocate*, 12 October 1916.

⁷⁴⁴ Joseph Outerbridge to J.R. Bennett, 11 September 1916, PANL, GN 2.14.276.

Reserve. Squires stated that he believed of was of vital importance that the government make no distinction between the Regiment and the Naval Reserve.⁷⁴⁵

Women played two major roles in Newfoundland's recruiting effort. First, many people in Newfoundland believed that women had a duty to encourage men to enlist. Recruiters published a consistent flow of material that called on women to encourage the men in their lives to enlist. While it is unknown how women responded to the calls of these recruiters, government officials noted that urban women were very effective recruiters, while they criticized the skills of female recruiters in rural Newfoundland. Second, women played a role, alongside men, in shaming men who refused to enlist. While there is little historical evidence written by contemporary women about white feathering, newspaper editors called on women to exercise caution when shaming men who were not in uniform. As a result of shaming by the non-enlisted by women and other men, the Newfoundland government approved a Rejected Volunteer badge to stop the harassment of men who the Naval Reserve or Regiment rejected.

Impact of Women's War Work

For the majority of Newfoundland history, women played vital roles in the fisheries, helping to convert raw product into marketable salt cod. In spite of this, their labour, both at home and in the fishery was seldom publicly credited to them. Conversely, during the First World War, women's war work was widely publicized, lauded, and publicly praised. The women of Newfoundland displayed great patriotism, sacrifice, and service during the

⁷⁴⁵ R.A. Squires to J.R. Bennett, 29 September 1916, PANL, GN 2.14.276.

war and this resulted in a great deal of pride in Newfoundland society. The question that remains is: what, if any, impact did women's war work have on the suffrage movement?

As previously discussed, prior to the war the suffrage movement was a near constant source of ridicule and sensationalism as the press focused on the activity of militant suffragists in Britain. When these groups abandoned their political and militant activities to support the war effort, the press coverage of the suffrage movement drastically changed. By 1915, women's participation in Newfoundland's war effort had convinced the majority of newspaper editors that women deserved the right to vote.

On 26 March 1915, for instance, the editor of the *Daily News* anticipated that there would be great changes coming to the British Empire. He stated that he believed women's franchise would be one of these changes. Robinson cited women's war work as the reason they will likely be given voting rights:

The World War will bring with it many changes, and probably amongst them will be the franchise for women. What no amount of militancy, so called, could ever do, patriotism may accomplish. Women have played a noble part during these terrible times, a womanly part, and the part of heroines as well. They have risen to heights of sacrifice and service that have never been excelled. Freely they have given husbands and sons to the cause of Liberty and done it with a pride and courage that is in itself an inspiration. In works of mercy, the highest and humblest in the land have been untiring... Britain has always held woman in chivalrous devotion; but to-day they stand upon an even higher plane, and by their exalted patriotism have demonstrated that citizenship means to them all that it means to the most loyal and devoted sons of Empire.⁷⁴⁶

In his high praise of women's wartime endeavours, Robinson emphasized that their devotion to the cause and their work towards bettering the British Empire should, and likely would, earn them the right to vote.⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴⁶ "Women of the Empire," *Daily News*, 26 March 1915.

⁷⁴⁷ "Women of the Empire," *Daily News*, 26 March 1915.

In 1916, there were some positive developments in women's suffrage as the municipal government in St. John's granted voting rights to any female ratepayer (a woman who was paying rent to live in a house within the city) in Municipal elections. A motion was made to enlarge the list of voters to include any woman over the age of 21, but this was voted down by the Citizen's Committee. Theobald, a columnist for the *Evening Telegram*, argued that the municipal government should give women the right to vote. He points out that since the war began, women had proven that they could take the place of a man who had gone to fight and in many cases were more effective than the men they were replacing. Theobald reminded his readers that women could be found working in engineering shops, running street cars, working as nurses in the trenches, and doing the important work of caring for the sick and wounded soldiers and sailors. Given their stellar record of work in the war, Theobald argued that it was unconscionable to deny them the right to vote: "How can it be possible to refuse their entry into full citizenship after such a record I cannot imagine, nor can conservation supply an adequate reason. After the war, if not during the war, women will be as a matter of course, not by courtesy, but by right, receive the full privileges and rights of citizenship."⁷⁴⁸

Wartime victories for the suffrage movement in Canada, Britain, and the United States increased supporters of suffrage in Newfoundland. Alex Mews, editor of the *Mail and Advocate*, highlighted the fact that soldiers in British Columbia had overwhelmingly voted for women's suffrage in light of the work they were performing in the war. Mews described women's suffrage as "one of the disputed rights which will come as a natural

⁷⁴⁸ "The Thoughts of Theobald," *Evening Telegram*, 27 May 1916.

right after the war is over, if not before. There remains no doubt whatever about that.”⁷⁴⁹ He said that by preventing women from voting, the government was denying the virtue and morality that women would bring to politics. By granting women the right to vote, Mews believed that the male dominated political system would become a little less corrupt and a little more virtuous.

One particular victory for women’s suffrage, that had an impact on conversations in Newfoundland, was the passing of the *Franchise Act* in Canada. This act gave voting rights to the wives and mothers of men who were fighting with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. The *Daily News* contended that all loyal citizens of the British Empire must be proud that the “right to vote is being given to the wives and mothers of the gallant Canadian lads who have proved their patriotism by voluntary service...” Robinson said that women who had enough patriotism to sacrifice their husbands or sons were uniquely qualified to vote, he wrote: “If these [women] are ready to immolate their dearest on the altar of their country, is it too much to demand for them a man’s share in the country of their country’s destiny? Surely not!”⁷⁵⁰

In November of 1917, the editor of the *Evening Advocate* reported on suffrage victories in United States and Canada. The article praised the decision of the State government in New York to unequivocally give women full voting rights in state elections. Winter told his readers that calls for suffrage in New York were based on women’s contributions to the American war effort. He surmised that these arguments were undebatable and the state government was forced to give women the right to vote.

⁷⁴⁹ “Woman Suffrage,” *Mail and Advocate*, 20 December 1916.

⁷⁵⁰ A New Franchise,” *Daily News*, 15 September 1917.

Similarly, Mews pointed out that Canada's *Franchise Act*, gave the right to vote to 1,200,000 female relatives of soldiers who were serving in Europe. While he admitted he was unsure if the people of Newfoundland were ready for this change, he acknowledged that the women of Newfoundland were just as fit to receive the vote as the women in the United States and Canada.⁷⁵¹

While many newspaper editors argued that women's support of the war effort had earned them the right to vote, others argued that women's franchise was a solution to the conditions that brought about the war and in some ways were just as important as the soldiers to securing world peace. In 1917, the editor of the *Evening Telegram*, praised the recommendations of the British Speakers' Conference on Electoral Reform, which unanimously recommended limited voting rights for women. Winter credited women's participation in the war effort with the Conference's recommendations saying, "it is not the war that has wrought this change, but woman's noble part in it." Mews believed that the British Empire would have to be rebuilt after the war. He argued women would play a vital role in rebuilding the Empire in an era of world peace.⁷⁵²

Conclusion

During the First World War, women in Newfoundland worked tirelessly to support the war effort by donating and volunteering with the Women's Patriotic Association, working as Nurse's, VADs, and by working to stimulate Newfoundland's recruiting campaign. Shortly after the war began, women's war work became an element of national

⁷⁵¹ "Woman Suffrage," *Evening Advocate*, 16 November 1917.

⁷⁵² "Woman's Triumph," *Evening Telegram*, 29 March 1917.

pride and women's wartime labour was seen as a patriotic duty, a gendered equivalent for men's military service.

Prior to the war, the suffrage movement received widespread negative press in newspapers across the Dominion. Newfoundland newspaper editors focused on the militant activities of suffragettes in Britain, publishing sensationalized accounts of assaults, arson, and bombings. Despite this, during the war, nearly every major newspaper in the Dominion began to actively support women receiving voting rights both in Newfoundland and the rest of the British Empire. Those who supported suffrage in Newfoundland argued women's war work had shown that women were every bit as deserving as men in determining the future of the Dominion.

The power of women's war work in convincing men that women deserved the right to vote stems from the power of wartime conceptions of citizenship. Prior to the war, citizenship was determined based on gender, ethnicity, and class. The social upheaval caused by Newfoundland's total war effort, allowed for patriotism, sacrifice, and service to supplant the societal importance of class and gender. Through their extreme expressions of patriotism towards the British Empire, sacrifices of their time and money, and through providing vital services to Newfoundland's war effort, Newfoundland women convinced many in Newfoundland that they were every bit as deserving and sometimes more deserving of the status of an individual than men were.

The editor of the *Daily News* clearly expressed the belief that patriotism, sacrifice, and service were more important to wartime conceptions of citizenship. In September of 1917, Robinson wrote an article calling on the government to strip voting rights from men who had conscientious objections to military service. He suggested that "[if men are] using

conscience as a cloak for cowardice, disloyalty, or treachery, such are unworthy not only of the rights of citizenship, but of citizenship itself.”⁷⁵³ Robinson advocated that these men have their voting rights stripped and given to patriotic women:

...it is inconceivable to a virile mind that there are in the world men who are content to allow their loved ones to become a prey to the infamies and lusts of an unspeakable foe, rather than strike a blow for their safety and for their liberties that their sires have won. But if there are, it is reasonable that he who is unwilling to defend his motherland, and those whom he has sworn to protect, should be accord the rights of a real man?... It is a matter for gratitude that there are those in Canada who stand ready to take from the spineless and disloyal the freeman's vote and transfer it to the brave and self-sacrificing women who have proved their worth by the part they have played in the greatest tragedy of time.⁷⁵⁴

By advocating for voting rights to be stripped away from men who were unwilling to sacrifice themselves and giving them to women who sacrificed their sons and husbands, the *Daily News* makes it incredibly clear that in wartime Newfoundland patriotism, sacrifice, and service were far more important determinants for who was and was not a liberal “individual” and deserved representation and the right to vote.⁷⁵⁵

The importance of patriotism, sacrifice, and service in determining who was and was not awarded the status of the “individual” in wartime Newfoundland closely parallels the situation in Britain between 1914 and 1918. In *The Blood of Our Sons, Men, Women*

⁷⁵³ “Conscientious Objectors,” *Daily News*, 15 September 1917.

⁷⁵⁴ “Conscientious Objectors,” *Daily News*, 15 September 1917.

⁷⁵⁵ Despite the outpouring of support for women's suffrage during the war, women in Newfoundland were denied voting rights until 1925. This was largely due to the election of Richard Squires as Prime Minister in 1919. Squires was a fierce opponent of suffrage, going so far as to threaten to take government appointments from any men whose wives were active in the suffrage movement. A suffrage bill was brought before the house of assembly in 1921, and despite great public support for the bill it was defeated with 13 of Squire's liberals voting against the bill and 9 Conservatives voting for it. A suffrage bill was finally passed in 1925 when Prime Minister Walter Stanley Monroe introduced a suffrage bill to the House of Assembly, and in part, argued that women had earned the right to vote through their work during the war. The bill passed unanimously, and became law on 13 April 1925.

and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War, Nicoletta Gullace found that British women used the wartime importance of patriotism and sacrifice to undermine the idea that citizenship was primarily determined by gender.⁷⁵⁶ Similarly, Susan Kent argues in *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* that in interwar Britain, the separate spheres of the masculine public and the feminine private redrawn to provide a more prominent role for women in public life in the hopes that another world war could be prevented.⁷⁵⁷ This closely mirrors the situation in Newfoundland, where women carved out a public role for themselves through the Women's Patriotic Association, which resulted in the acknowledgement of the importance of women's work to the war effort.

⁷⁵⁶ Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons*, 3-4.

⁷⁵⁷ Susan Kent, *Making Peace*, 141.

Conclusion

Ian McKay defined liberalism as a political philosophy containing three major categories: the concept of the “individual,” a focus on the rights of individuals, and the right of all individuals to own property. In Newfoundland, during the First World War, changing conceptions of gender, ethnicity, and class altered two of these three pillars. Wartime conceptions of ethnicity, gender, and class vastly widened the concept of the individual to focus on people of all socio-economic classes and genders to support the war effort. At the same time, changing conceptions of ethnicity resulted in the government stripping the rights from ethnic groups they believed posed a risk to the Dominion. The requirements of a total war effort caused the liberal state and the citizens to abandon the liberal focus on individual rights and to focus on the rights of the community, the Empire, and the World.

Prohibition

During the war, temperance advocates used the language of sacrifice and service to suggest that alcohol was damaging soldier’s ability to fight. As a result, pre-existing prohibition movements were given new life. Temperance advocates urged that Newfoundland needed prohibition not only to help the war effort but to protect the people, particularly producers, from the scourge of alcohol. They insisted that every patriotic Newfoundland should be willing to give up alcohol for the greater good of the war effort and to make their country a better place. The passing of a strict prohibition, which criminalized the sale, possession, and consumption indicates that the war caused many to

people to believe that the right of the community to be protected from alcohol far outweighed the rights of the individual to drink.

Food Rationing and Price Control

The rationing of food and controlling of prices was another example of the renegotiations of class that impacted the working of the liberal state. As the war caused the prices of the necessities of life to increase, Newfoundland society debated what the government's role should be fixing this issue. Progressives in Newfoundland, who represented the producers, argued that the government should regulate prices to ensure that everyone would be able to afford to heat their houses and feed their families. Furthermore, they argued that the business class had a duty to provide the people of Newfoundland with the necessities of life at an affordable price. On the other hand, liberals argued that the government should not and could not interfere with prices, as these were a result of wartime conditions. Instead, they argued that the government should focus on ensuring that Newfoundland had adequate supplies of the necessities of life, whatever the prices would be.

Ultimately, both sides of this debate had successes during the war. The Progressives were able to convince the government to regulate the price of coal, seize privately held stocks and sell that coal. On the issue of flour, the government agreed to form a Food Control Board to control prices, but their actions were focused on more liberal ideas: reducing flour consumption through rationing and substitutes. While both sides disagreed on what should be done, it is important to note that both liberals and Progressives demanded government interference in free markets, a betrayal of traditional liberal values.

Taxation

The implementation of a business profits tax and later an income tax was a drastic alteration in the liberal order that resulted from the renegotiation of conceptions of class in the Dominion. Prior to the war, the government collected taxes evenly from all citizens through import duties. During the war, many producers felt that it was unfair for the business community to pay only slightly more than Newfoundland's poorest citizens. Instead, they advocated for a business profits tax and an income tax that ensured those who were best able to financially support the war effort did so.

The business profits tax was perhaps the most controversial issue throughout the war and caused a constitutional crisis between the House of Commons and the Legislative Council. This proves that the "passive revolution" in the liberal order was hotly debated as members of the business class refused to be shouldered with what they considered to be an unfair amount of responsibility for Newfoundland's war effort. Despite the hard negotiations of the business community, they ultimately lost and the government enacted the business profits tax and the income tax. This proves that under Newfoundland's wartime social covenant that patriotism and sacrifice came before profits. This becomes particularly clear with public outrage against amongst producers as they viewed the business community as unpatriotic war profiteers who cared little about the soldiers who were sacrificing their lives.

Enemy Aliens

The treatment of enemy aliens was a profound renegotiation of ethnic categories in the Dominion of Newfoundland. Prior to the war, many Newfoundlanders held Germans and Germany in high regard. Newspapers often described Germans as intelligent, clean, cultured, and efficient. Shortly after the war began, Newfoundland newspapers began to demonize Germans, like newspapers were doing across the British Empire. The Department of Justice created a list of enemy aliens in 1915 and the Newfoundland Constabulary began arresting Germans and Austro-Hungarians across the island.

While the majority of those arrested in Newfoundland were German and Austro-Hungarian sailors who had the misfortune of docking in Newfoundland ports, several of the POWs detained in the Dominion were long-time residents of Newfoundland, or British Subjects. These people, though the state would have previously considered them “individuals” under the liberal order, were denied this status during the war. The government denied these people the right to a trial (a right that was offered to criminals), denied the treatments according to POWs, and denied the basic rights of British citizens. The renegotiation of ethnic categories did not only extend to Germans and Austro-Hungarians but also to Allied and neutral nations as well. Across the Dominion those born in Newfoundland treated Britons, Americans, Italians, Norwegians, and Russians with extreme suspicion and hostility and accused many of being German spies.

Recruiting and Conscription

Perhaps the most important element of this new social covenant between citizens and the state was the recruitment of soldiers for the Newfoundland Regiment and Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve. During the war, ideals of masculinity were renegotiated to place an emphasis on military service over providing for their families. The government, in essence, created this new social covenant by telling young men that their primary duty was to the state and not to their families. Both government and civilian recruiters told young men across the Dominion that their place was in the trenches of the Western Front and not with their families. In return for their service, citizens argued that the government should look after their families and dependants. This was the basis for the renegotiation of the relationship between the citizens and the state as citizens began to expect the government to for families while their husbands were fighting the war.

While the Newfoundland government decided to rely on a campaign of voluntary recruitment at the beginning of the war, by 1917 the government believed that men were failing to live up to wartime conceptions of masculinity. As a result, the House of Assembly debated and passed the Military Service Act forcing men to enlist with the military. The passing of conscription in Newfoundland is evidence of the enforcement of the new social covenant. Under this unwritten agreement, young men were expected to be patriotic enough to offer their service to the state. When the government believed they broke this covenant, they passed conscription, coercing young men to abide by it.

The imposition of conscription is clear proof of a drastic change in the liberal order. The government obliterated the rights of individual citizens to choose to enlist when they passed conscription without a vote. Furthermore, the state also rescinded the freedom of

the press and speech when they refused to allow any public dissent to the Conscription bill before it became law.

Women's War Work

Women's work in support of Newfoundland's war effort reconfigured conceptions of gender and the relationship between citizens and the state. Throughout Newfoundland history, women have played crucial roles in the formation of their families and of the Dominion. Despite this hard work, women's contributions to the public sphere had often been overlooked or attributed to their husbands. During the First World War, Women's War Work was not only acknowledged by Newfoundland society, it was deemed as crucial to the functioning of the Newfoundland Regiment.

The impact on Women's war work on perceptions of suffrage was astounding. Prior to the war, the majority of Newfoundland newspapers derided the suffrage movement, choosing to focus on the radical suffrage movement in Britain. Despite this, as the war dragged on many newspapers praised the Women's Patriotic Association for their patriotism, sacrifice, and service. As a result, by the end of the war, nearly every major newspaper in the Dominion believed that women had earned the right to vote through their war work and should be granted full voting rights.

Women's war work in Newfoundland, shows that the liberal concept of the individual had begun to expand to include women, a group that had been excluded since its foundation. Women's war work showed many men women's valuable contributions to society. The drive to include women as "individuals" was so powerful that every major newspaper in the Dominion argued women should have full voting rights.

The First World War and the Liberal Order

Ian McKay argues that during the First and Second World Wars, liberalism made compromises, during a period he refers to as the “passive revolution,” to maintain hegemony. In the Dominion of Newfoundland changing wartime conceptions of gender, ethnicity, and class caused drastic changes to who fit into the liberal conception of the “individual.” With a much broader inclusion of the “individual” the government in Newfoundland became much more concerned with the rights and protections of the community instead of the rights and protections of the individual. In fact, many in the Dominion argued that protecting the rights of the community was the best way to protect the rights of the individual.

In many ways, wartime liberalism in Newfoundland was vastly different to pre-war liberal governance. McKay argues that these drastic changes were compromises, however, I argue that they were radical changes. Liberalism in wartime Newfoundland was much like the Ship of Theseus: if so many parts of traditional liberalism changed during the war, should it still be considered a “liberal order?” Instead of making compromises, the liberal order metamorphized into something new: social liberalism in its infancy. A liberalism that realized the community was made of individuals and believed the best way to protect the rights of the individual, were to protect the rights of the community.

There is one major question that remains: would Newfoundland’s social liberalism survive the war and continue into the postwar period, or would the wartime focus on community instead of individual influence postwar politics? In Mark Humphries book *The Last Plague: Spanish Influenza and the Politics of Health in Canada*, he argues that the Canadian response to the Spanish influenza outbreak created a drastic change in the

philosophy of healthcare in Canada. Whereas before the war health was viewed as a personal problem, the mass death caused by the Spanish Flu made the government realize that health was in fact a public issue. In this case, Humphries suggests that Canada's experience with the Spanish Flu paved the way for Canada's socialized healthcare program.

The Newfoundland case, however, is not as clear as the Canadian case. The Great Depression, the influence of base construction, the end of self-government, the commission of government, and Newfoundland's eventual entrance into confederation with Canada all complicate the development of liberal thought in the interwar period. A thorough examination of the liberal order would make a powerful tool for better understanding Newfoundland's political development in the interwar period.

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