NEWFOUNDLAND LABOUR AND WORLD WAR I: THE EMERGENCE OF THE NEWFOUNDLAND INDUSTRIAL WORKERS' ASSOCIATION

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Newfoundland Labour and World War I: The Emergence of the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association

By

© Peter S. McInnis, B.A., M.L.S.

A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

The story of the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association (NIWA) is one which has largely been passed over in the writing of the island's labour history. Yet this organization figures prominently in the events which helped shape the labour-capital relationship during the World War I years. As the Canadian and international record will testify, these years were critically important to the development of modern working-class organizations, while maintaining a direct link to the previous struggles of an earlier era. Centred in St. John's, but exerting an Island-wide influence, the NIWA arose out of a pressing need for working people to confront the economic and political realities of their class in a manner intended to redress the subservient and exploitive circumstances to which they were subjected. This thesis examines the NIWA in terms of its structure, membership, and mandate and attempts to place this movement into the larger context of the international labour revolt of 1917 to 1920. In doing so, it argues that class formation, development, and conflict is central to history.

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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

AND Company	Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company
BRT	Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen
FPU	Fishermen's Protective Union
IAM	International Association of Machinists
IBPS & PMW	International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite, and Paper Mill Workers
ITU	International Typographical Union
JTUA	Journeymen Tailors' Union of America
LSPU	Longshoremen's Protective Union
MHA	Member of the House of Assembly
NIWA	Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association
NFL	Newfoundland Federation of Labour
NTLC	Newfoundland Trades and Labour Council
ORT	Order of Railway Telegraphers
PANL	Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador
RNCP	Reid Newfoundland Company Papers
TPU	Truckmens' Protective Union

Introduction

The years 1917-1920 witnessed an upheaval of the working class that was international in scope and which had profound ramifications for Western society. The events surrounding World War I have often been described as a watershed between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Certainly the war's effect was felt on many homefronts as well as upon the battlefields. Wartime conditions placed great strains on the economies and social orders of many nations. For working people, war presented an opportunity for collective action on a scale beyond what might have been possible in times of peace. The extreme hardships and privations placed upon those who could least bear this burden resulted in widespread dissension and a rapidly growing determination to effect major social reforms in the relationship of capital to labour. Historian James Cronin has written that World War I had a significant effect on concentrating and heightening labour unrest, but to overemphasize the war period itself detaches the events of this time from the "general evolution of class relationships" both before and after this conflict in a manner which fails to explain the "continuity" that connects these periods. In other words, the events surrounding the war must be explained as part

of the "long-term process of class formation."[1] This process may have been gradual, but it gained tremendous momentum in the turmoil of World War I.

The move towards a new social formation was evident across Europe and North America as workers everywhere openly protested the conditions under which they were forced to exist. The growth of revolutionary industrial unionism was evident in Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and in both the United States and Canada.[2] These unions sought to unite workers under single organizations which would cut across the boundaries of craft and levels of skill. Both skilled workers and unskilled labourers realized that new technology and methods of scientific management being implemented in the work place threatened to undermine the traditional divisions and segments of labour. Industrial unionism experienced tremendous growth in the war years as workers sought to establish new structures which would prove more effective in safeguarding their interests. Larry Peterson has recently argued: "A simultaneous reading of the labor historiography of

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[1]James E. Cronin, "Labor Insurgency and Class Formation: Comparative Perspectives on the Crisis of 1917-1920," Social Science History, 4 (1) Winter 1980, 126-27.

[2]Larry Peterson, "The One Big Union in International Perspective: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism, 1900-1925," in Work, Community, and Power, ed. James E. Cronin and Carmen Sirianni (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 49.

these countries leads to the inescapable conclusion that industrial unionism after 1900 was truly an international phenomenon."[3] The strength of industrial unionism was reflected not only by the large numbers of working people involved in this movement, but in the rhetoric which reflected an attitude of aggressive confrontation. Gone was the deferential tug of the forelock or the soft-spoken tone of past workers. In its place was a new defiance and determination to fight for a social order which would provide the working class with a more equitable share of the wealth and power. Canadian workers testifying in front of the 1919 Royal Commission on Industrial Relations (the Mathers Commission) spoke with radical zeal when they firmly told the commissioners that they did not simply desire a raise in pay or expanded social legislation, but instead they demanded a new society based upon production for use, instead of for profit. One witness to the Mathers Commission succinctly described the workers demands by stating, "We are the producers and we are not getting what we produce ... [only] complete ownership of the machines of production by the working class" would redress this situation.[4]

Economic hardship played a major role in the develop-

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[3] Ibid., 50.

[4] Gregory S. Kealey, "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt," Labour/Le Travail, 13 (Spring 1984), 12-13.

ment of a working-class consciousness. David Montgomery has stated that, "Workers developed their consciousness ... primarily by means of economic action and organization rather than formal ideology."[5] James Cronin supports this interpretation when he writes that the effect of economic upheaval upon the lives of working people resulted in profound dissension which was "more important than simple war-weariness and the growth of an anti-war sentiment."[6] Cronin places great emphasis on unstable prices and a falling currency value as a catalyst for radical unrest:

> The contribution of rapid inflation to the development of class consciousness is difficult to overstress because rising prices did more than simply erode buying power. Inflation tends to break custom, it wipes out historical relatives and established differentials overnight.[7]

Throughout North America and Europe workers who had long been frustrated with their low economic and social status found that the war had a dual effect: it compounded troubles while at the same time offering an avenue of escape through class militancy. One manifestation of these protests was overt strike activities which intrinsically assumed the form of political demonstrations probing the boundaries of power in a search for social

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[5]Peterson, "The One Big Union," 50-51.

[6]Cronin, "Labor Insurgency and Class Formation," 133.

[7]Ibid., 134.

realignment.[8]

Following research into the nature of these protests in the European and American historiographies, Canadian scholars have turned their attentions to working-class movements prominent during the World War I years. It has now become common for historians writing in Atlantic Canadian labour history to preface their works with statements exposing the longstanding fallacy of Eastern Canadian conservatism and passivity -- what E.R. Forbes has termed the "Maritimes stereotype."[9] Clearly there has been much to take issue with in the backhanded dismissals usually accorded this region. The paucity of historical analysis given to the east in most textbook surveys tends to reinforce the notion that Atlantic Canada lagged behind most of the North American continent. Proponents of this view posit the theory that in the absence of scholarly work, it may be assumed nothing of importance exists, rather than the more accurate deduction that, as yet, little has been written. Fortunately in the last decade this state of affairs has greatly changed. Beginning with a re-evaluation of Nova Scotia's labour past, the lives of working-class people throughout Eastern Canada are

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[8]Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, Strikes in France, 1830-1968 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

[9]Ernest R. Forbes, The Maritimes Rights Movement, 1919-1927: A Study in Canadian Regionalism (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979).

undergoing historical investigation. What is emerging from this research is a better understanding of Atlantic Canada and a growing realization that labour activism and conscious working-class behaviour does not (nor ever did) end as one travels east. Each region has experienced its unique fermentation of social and political elements and one goal of this thesis is to contribute to the ongoing debate as to whether the descriptors, "radical West" and "conservative East," can now be applied as they once were.[10] An implicit argument throughout this work is that when it comes to labour activism, Easterners need take no lessons from the West.

The lack of primary sources is a common complaint of social historians who must often work with fragmentary records to reconstruct the lives of working-class people.[11] The scholar of Newfoundland's social history

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[10]The major proponents of "Western exceptionalism" includes; David J. Bercuson, "Labour Radicalism and the Western Industrial Frontier: 1897-1919," Canadian Historical Review, 58, 2 (June 1977), 154-75; Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg: Industrial Relations, and the General Strike, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974); Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978); A. Ross McCormack, Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977); McCormack, "British Working-Class Immigrants and Canadian Radicalism: The Case of Arthur Puttee," Canadian Ethnic Studies, 10, 2 (1978), 22-37.

[11]Russell G. Hann and Gregory S. Kealey, "Documenting Working Class History: North American Traditions and New Approaches," Archivaria, 4 (1979), 92-114.

must face additional problems in the availability of material. Some of these difficulties are attributable to the nature of a small self-governing British colony which essentially lacked the governmental infrastructure, and in the case of its leaders, also lacked the inclination to provide detailed records of its working-class citizens. This changed for the better with the advent of the Commission of Government in 1934 as British civil servants provided Newfoundland with a much-needed example in the establishment and maintenance of statistical records.[12] Yet before this era, the reserve of empirical data from which historians may draw remains severely limited. Newfoundland lacks an equivalent of Canada's Labour Gazette which, despite its inconsistencies, does provide a valuable source for union activities and wage data comparisons. Business records are also limited and, where available, usually incomplete. Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of research in Newfoundland's pre-Confederation social history is the extreme paucity of union records and relevant labour publications.[13] This is especially true of ephemeral sources such as labour-orientated newspapers.

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[12]An example of this would be, Thomas K. Liddell, Industrial Survey of Newfoundland (St. John's: Robinson and Company, 1940).

[13]Although St. John's had a vibrant working-class press, few copies of these newspapers are today extant. For example, only one copy of the NIWA's The Industrial Worker is preserved.

By default, prospective researchers are left to rely heavily on general newspaper sources to determine the basic chronology surrounding labour and working-class events. Because an interest in this social history developed somewhat later than elsewhere in Canada attempts to collect and preserve Newfoundland materials have been slow to develop with the result that less survives today than one would hope. Gradually the body of secondary literature is being expanded to encompass a broader range of the region's social history, but obvious gaps remain.[14] This thesis essentially draws from the resources of three M.A. theses relevant to the topic of the World War I labour movement, and its background, and as well makes use of available secondary sources, which are as valuable to this research as they are limited in number.[15] It is the hope that further efforts will continue to preserve what remains of Newfoundland's labour and working-class history for it is a rich and fascinating past deserving of such

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[14]For example, no historical survey of the St. John's economy exists for the period from 1915 to 1949.

[15]Of primary importance were: Bill Gillespie, "A History of the Newfoundland Federation of Labour, M.A. thesis Memorial University, 1980; John Joy, "The Growth and Development of Trades and Manufacturing in St. John's, 1870-1914," M.A. thesis, Memorial University, 1977; Patricia R. O'Brien, "The Newfoundland Patriotic Association: The Administration of the War Effort, 1914-1918," M.A. thesis, Memorial University, 1982. Another basic, but often flawed account is to be found in, Rolf Hattenhauer "A History of the Labour Movement in Newfoundland," unpublished manuscript, Memorial University, 1983.

attention. European scholars have noted that "Canadian history affords golden opportunities for comparative analysis, quite apart from the intrinsic interest of Canadian developments themselves."[16] Similarly, I feel, an equally bold claim may be made for the value of Newfoundland's social history, both in comparison to the Canadian record and as a compelling story in itself.

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[16]Geoff Eley, et al. "Editorial," Social History, 10, 3 (October 1985), 269-72.

Chapter One

The Political Economy of St. John's, 1855-1914

The primacy of the fishing industry in the Newfoundland economy has been well documented and extensively considered in scholarly literature.[1] For it was fish which first attracted European nations to cross the North Atlantic. By the nineteenth century the foundation of what is often referred to as the "traditional" maritime economy centred on the pursuit of the cod and seal fisheries.[2] Despite some early attempts in the 1850s and 1860s to diversify the Island's economy by encouraging agriculture the cod fishery retained its leading role.[3] "The inshore salt cod industry dominated Newfoundland's economic history in the nineteenth century and continued to be the single most important source of employment and market income well into the twentieth."[4] In turn, the cod and seal fisheries were largely controlled from the

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[1]See, for example, Shannon Ryan, "The Newfoundland Salt Cod Trade in the Nineteenth Century," in Newfoundland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Essays in Interpretation, ed. James Hiller, and Peter Neary (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 40-66; Ryan, A Fish Out of Water, Newfoundland History Series No. 2 (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1986), 38-75.

[2]Ryan, "Salt Cod Trade," 40.

[3]James K. Hiller, "The Railway and Local Politics in Newfoundland, 1870-1901," in Hiller and Neary, 123-25.

[4]David G. Alexander, "Newfoundland's Traditional Economy and Development to 1934," Acadiensis, 5 (2) 1976, 56-78.

capital city of St. John's which had managed to exert a growing influence on this industry from the latter part of the nineteenth century.[5] The St. John's fish merchants formed the nucleus of Newfoundland's social, commercial, and political elite. Bound by close ethnic, religious, and class ties, this group was paramount in every facet of the Island's political economy. While numerically small, consisting of about fifteen major firms, these merchants wielded a power wholly disproportionate to their size.[6] One could not but encounter the names of Bowering, Harvey, Winter, Ayre, Munn, Crosbie, Job, and others when examining the directorships of fish export/import firms, and local manufacturing and commercial firms. Indeed, the gulf which divided the wealth and power of the "fishocracy" from that of the rural fishermen, woodsmen, and urban labourers engendered bitterness in the collective working-class conscience. "Water Street, the sea-front thoroughfare along which the leading merchant houses had their premises, was an object of hatred and fear."[7] The corporate entity of "Water Street" came to represent a privileged clique of business interests which pursued

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[5] Ian D.H. McDonald, "W.F. Coaker and the Fishermen's Protective Union in Newfoundland Politics, 1908-1925," unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of London, 1971, chapter 1.

[6] Ibid.

[7] S.J.R. Noel, Politics in Newfoundland (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 21.

capitalist ventures far removed from the concerns of the class whose labours formed the basis of their wealth.[8]

In politics, as in the economy, power was concentrated in the hands of this small elite. During the nineteenth century, Newfoundland had evolved a highly centralized administrative bureaucracy. The weakness of the lower strata of government structure, in part due to the logistical problems of geographic remoteness and a sparse population, meant that in St. John's there was "an extraordinary concentration of power at the top."[9] The importance of obtaining and holding a government's favour was critical in a small society built on patronage and connections to those of influence. Although there was a growing middle class of professionals in the city, little could be done that did not come under the scrutiny of Water Street and its minions. "This relatively simple, personal, and highly centralized system functioned within a society that to a remarkable degree had retained its original social and economic structure from the early nineteenth century, including its sharp cleavages of class and religion."[10] The political economy was permeated with

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[8]McDonald, "Coaker and the F.P.U.," chapter 1 and passim.

[9]Noel, Politics, 18; Kenneth Kerr, "A Social Analysis of the Member of the House of Assembly, Executive Council, and Legislative Assembly for 1855-1914," unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial University, 1978.

[10]Ibid., 21.

the character and mood of a hierarchical tradition which viewed the attainment of power as an open opportunity to exploit the working people in order to enhance the personal interests of the elite. Years later, at the time when Britain was forced to suspend Newfoundland's constitution thus ending responsible government, the 1933 Royal Commission led by Lord Amulree commented on the debilitating nature of a political structure so obviously based on the "spoils system":

> 'Politics' have come to be regarded as an unclean thing which no self-respecting man should touch; the very word 'politician" is virtually a term of abuse which carries with it the suggestion of crookedness and sharp practice.[11]

This highly partisan world of political intrigue was clearly reflected in all levels of the government's administrative infrastructure. The Island's civil servants, charged with the responsibility of maintaining some semblance of bureaucratic order, were often subject to "sudden dismissal" with each shift in political direction. The result of this insecurity of tenure was an administration with "no continuity of policy and no incentive to take responsibility....reduced to a state of abject subservience, apathy and indifference."[12] Not

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[11] Newfoundland Royal Commission Report, 1933 (The Amulree Report), (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1934), 86.

[12] Ibid., 87.

surprisingly, Newfoundland lagged far behind other Western nations in the implementation of progressive social legislation -- something which was to plague the Island's working class for generations.

Another salient feature of Newfoundland's social construction, so ingrained by the turn-of-the-century as to be partially obscured, was its religious composition. In the 1860s the colony had arrived at a power sharing arrangement which informally ensured the "denominational principle" of awarding patronage positions on a "roughly proportional basis among the adherents of the various religions faiths."[13] In time, this "institutionalized" sectarianism became part of the fabric of the Island's political economy which separated the Irish Catholics from the English and Scottish Protestants. These traditional divisions were responsible for the development of rival social institutions based on religious denomination. In St. John's, two of the city's major meeting halls demonstrated these divisions: the Masonic Temple and the Catholic Star of the Sea Society were prominently situated close by one another. As S.J.R. Noel notes:

> There was scarcely an area of social life into which organized religious sectarianism did not in some way intrude, sustained and reinforced by a system of education that was totally

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[13]Noel, Politics, 24.

church-controlled.[14]

In the capital city, the influence of the church was largely felt by unionized workers, the great majority of whom were Roman Catholics.[15] In the past, tensions between the Catholic working class and Protestant fish merchants had caused widening sectarian divisions. In the twentieth century these divisions were somewhat less acute, but they still remained, and in many ways continued to inform every aspect of the city's political economy.

By the late nineteenth century the severe limitations inherent in a single staple economy based on the fishery were generally recognized. In the 1880s the traditional Newfoundland economy "reached a limit to its extensive growth and further development was perceived as a function of the emergence of modern resource industries."[16] Plans to diversify the economy took several forms, but the end result was to push the colony to the brink of financial collapse several times before the 1930s. Historian David Alexander stressed that the Island's overall poverty left its political economy without the resources necessary to

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[14] Ibid., 21.

[15] Jessie Chisholm, "'Hang Her Down': Strikes in St. John's, 1890-1914," unpublished paper, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1987, 18-20; For further statistics for the city's denominational breakdown see, Melvin Baker, The Government of St. John's, Newfoundland, 1800-1921," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1980, 394-5.

[16] Alexander, "Traditional Economy," 56-78.

ensure effective government:

> The country was characterized by desperately inadequate personal incomes and a shrunken tax base too small to maintain the instruments of a sovereign state, a minimal level of social services, and the interest payments on a large and inflexible national debt which was mainly held abroad.[17]

Much of this public debt was incurred in Newfoundland's great railroad construction phase and thus was due to mistakes in developing a national policy rather than to the colony's limited natural resource base. The growth in the public debt was not inevitable. In the end, it was the result of political decisions.

The importance of railways for the development of a diversified, "progressive" economy and in fostering a strong sense of nationhood was considered beyond question in nineteenth-century North America. The close association between railroads and all that seemed desirable in terms of prosperity and self-identity amounted to a powerful attraction to entrepreneurs and governments seeking to develop their economies and to open their hinterlands to the exploitation of natural resources.[18] Newfoundland entered into the era of railway construction

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[17]Alexander, The Decay of Trade: An Economic History of the Newfoundland Saltfish Trade, 1935-1965, Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies, No. 19 (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977), 1-2.

[18]Harold A. Innis, A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway (Toronto: Macmillan, Rev. ed. 1962), chapter 6.

later than mainland North America due to its relative isolation and an historic oceanic orientation directed towards the British Empire and the Western European economy.[19] "When the colony did begin railroad building, it was not primarily in response to continental pressures, but because the traditional, fish-based economy was not sufficiently productive to give most Newfoundlanders an adequate level of employment and income."[20] The colony was under intense financial and political pressure to diversify its economy and to expand into ventures which would make use of the Island's mineral and timber resources.[21] The decision to develop the transportation infrastructure as an incentive for further schemes has been described as Newfoundland's "National Policy." Yet despite various programs aimed at encouraging agricultural development and a more balanced economy, "most Newfoundlanders remained on the outer coast relying as always on the sea, the merchant, and the government."[22]

Although the first call for construction of a Newfoundland railway was made as early as 1847, it was not

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[19]Alexander, "Traditional Economy," 56-78.

[20]Hiller, "Railway and Local Politics," 123; Alexander, Decay of Trade, 1.

[21]Alexander, Atlantic Canada and Confederation: Essays in canadian Political Economy, comps. E.W. Sager, L.R. Fisher, and S.O. Pierson (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1983), 9-10.

[22]Ibid.

until the 1870s that the plan received serious consideration.[23] The railway business was proving to be a venture fraught with political and financial liabilities. The "railway question had become the central issue of Newfoundland politics .... It cut across party lines, creating new divisions, new allegiances, and eventually new parties."[24] In addition, the matter had alienated the powerful fish merchants from their traditional political wing, the Conservative party. "There can be little doubt that many of the larger fish merchants viewed the railway with grave misgivings. They feared increased labour costs, increased taxes, loss of coastal trade for their ships, and eventual colonial bankruptcy and confederation."[25] It would take until the following century to affirm the veracity of this pessimistic prophecy.

After a series of abortive schemes, the decision was made to grant the contract to an individual who would build the line at a set price. The award of the contract in June 1890 brought Robert G. Reid to Newfoundland.[26]

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[23] J.W. McGrath, "R.G. Reid and the Newfoundland Railway," Newfoundland Historical Society, St. John's, 8 December 1971.

[24] Hiller, "The Newfoundland Railway, 1881-1949" Newfoundland Historical Society, pamphlet, No. 6, (1981), 8.

[25] Hiller, "Railway and Local Politics," 129.

[26] Ibid., 136; Robert Gillespie Reid, born in Scotland, 1841; first trained as a stonemason and later worked in Australian gold ventures. Reid became involved in

Reid was to eventually complete the line to the railway's new western terminus at Port-aux-Basques; a task which he completed by 1897.[27] The following year the Newfoundland government was faced with a national calamity. St. John's was rebuilding both its physical and financial structures as a result of a disastrous fire (1892), followed by a bank crash (1894). The collapse of fish prices added to a mounting public debt and the government was faced with the onerous prospect of operating a railway many felt was certain to lose money.[28] The issue of whether the railroad would eventually turn a profit continued to be raised in subsequent years and there is some evidence that suggests that the "official" losses annually attributed to the railroad were, in fact, altered to show greater operating expenses than were actually incurred.[29] Taking

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railway contracting and built a number of major railway bridges in the United States and Canada. He had amassed a considerable personal fortune working on CPR projects by the time he travelled to Newfoundland. Reid died in Montreal in 1908, passing his corporate holdings on to his three sons. See, "The Great Sir Robert Reid-The Man Who Built The Railway," in The Book of Newfoundland, Vol. 3, ed. J.R. Smallwood (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937), 568-73.

[27] Ibid., 137. Reid's profit was reportedly $2,000 per mile. See, Hiller, "Newfoundland Railway," 34.

[28] The plan involved public debentures of $943,000 borrowed at 6 per cent interest. A.B. Morine, The Railway Contract, 1898 and Afterwards (St. John's: n.p., [1933]), 9.

[29] In October 1917, Governor Walter Davidson, writing to the Colonial Office, commented on the Reid Newfoundland Company's railroad operations: "I do not know if the

advantage of the colony's weak finances Reid offered to negotiate a new extended contract for the railway. The result was the infamous 1898 agreement known as the "Reid Deal."[30] In return for a cash payment of $1 million, Reid (and his sons) secured an astounding list of concessions which included: a 50-year contract to operate the national railway (until 1948), which would then become the property of his heirs; lands grants totalling over five million acres (including mineral and water rights); a 30 year franchise to operate the colony's coastal steamship service and the operation of the vital Cabot Strait ferry linking the railhead at Port-aux-Basques to Nova Scotia (for an annual subsidy of $100,000); the purchase and operation of the publicly-owned St. John's dry dock; and the island's telegraph system.[31] In addition, Reid was to establish the St. John's Street Railway Company which

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Railway pays a profit. There is a Statement laid before the General Assembly yearly which certifies to a loss: but [Prime Minister] Sir Edward Morris has told me that not very much importance need be attached to this statement the expenditures including, for instance, enormous salaries to the president (W.D. Reid), the Vice President (H.D. Reid) and the general Manager (R.G. Reid). No dividends are announced, the stock being held by the family, and by Lord Shaughnessy." CO 194/295, Governor W.E. Davidson to Walter H. Long, 24 October 1917.

[30]Noel, Politics, 27-29.

[31]For a further explanation of the contract, see: J.W. McGrath, "The 1898 Contract," Newfoundland Historical Society, 1973; Alfred R. Penney, "The Newfoundland Railway: Newfoundland Epic," in The Book of Newfoundland, Vol. 3, 473-502.

would construct and operate a streetcar system, the energy for which would be supplied from a company-owned hydro-electric plant to be situated outside the city.[32] "In short, the colony's entire communications system was to be handed over to a private individual."[33] Historian J.K. Hiller has commented that at the time, "A French newspaper spoke of Reid as another Cecil Rhodes; a more analogous figure might be K.C. Irving."[34]

The magnitude of the 1898 Contract firmly established the Reids as major players in Newfoundland society for here was an "empire which began to rival the government as a source of patronage."[35] Moreover, the source of this influence lay in industrial development schemes and not with the traditional power base of the fish merchants. "Ultimately, the question of Reid's place in the economy and politics of the island split the traditional governing elite into pro-Reid and anti-Reid factions."[36] Indeed,

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[32]For details see, Brian Wadden, "The St. John's Street Railway Company," Newfoundland Quarterly, 64, 1 (Spring 1965), 3-5, 27-30.

[33]Noel, Politics, 27; Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, summed up the British reaction, "The future of the Colony will be placed entirely in the hands of the contractor by the railway contract, which appears highly improvident," Amulree Report, 33-34.

[34]Hiller, "Railway and Local Politics," 139.

[35]Noel, Politics, 26.

[36]Ibid.

the "Reid Deal" caused a political furor which led to the defeat of the government and the installation of a new administration given the specific mandate to halt the rapacious "Czar Reid" and his family from further domination of the Newfoundland economy.[37] The opportunity to re-negotiate the contract arose during this period when R.G. Reid was forced to make concessions to the government in an unsuccessful attempt to secure a $5 million loan from the London money market. The funds were necessary to allow Reid to expand and develop his interests in the mineral and timber rights he held as the result of earlier railway contracts.[38] The loan could only be granted to a limited liability company, something Reid could not establish without the government's permission. In July 1901, the original contract was modified under the following terms: the government returned Reid his $1 million (plus 6 per cent interest), he, in turn, relinquished his reversionary interest in the railway and government telegraph system, returned 1.5 million acres of land (for a payment of $850,000), and made several other minor concessions.[39] "Otherwise existing agreements were

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[37]Hiller, "Railway and Local Politics," 140.

[38]Reid Newfoundland Company was capitalized at $25 million, see P.T. McGrath, Newfoundland in 1911 (London: Whitehead, Morris and Co., 1911), 57.

[39]For an explanation see: Hiller, "Railway and Local Politics," 140-41; Morine, Contract, passim; Amulree Report, 35-37.

unchanged, except that the operating period was extended to 1951 and Reid was allowed to assign his responsibilities to the Reid Newfoundland Company."[40] Thus the government had averted a situation which if allowed to continue might have rendered the island a personal fiefdom of the Reid empire. "In all, it cost the colony some $2.5 million to repurchase assets which, in the opinion of the vast majority of its citizens, should never have been surrendered in the first place."[41] These events ensured that the name of Reid would long be synonymous with exploitation.

As a result of extensive government contracts and land concessions granted to the Reid family during this railway construction phase, the Reid Newfoundland Company became actively involved in most aspects of the colony's economy. In the period between the signing of the revised railway contract (1901) and up to the year the Company, suffering the effects of the worldwide Depression and several failed resource schemes, entered into receivership (1931), Reid Newfouhdland branched out into a number of ventures of critical importance to the island's hopes of a diversified economy. These involved primary resource development such as: timber, pulp and paper, hydroelectric, and mining operations. Some of the Reid enterprises

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[40]Hiller, "Newfoundland Railway," 17-18.

[41]Noel, Politics, 34.

were also involved in chemical manufacturing and cement production, as well as processing and exporting frozen fish to European markets.[42] Combined with the transportation industries, these resource extraction and secondary manufacturing ventures made Reid Newfoundland a powerful and broadly-based corporation, armed with considerable economic and political clout. As the Newfoundland Royal Commission headed by Lord Amulree would note some years later, "the Reid Newfoundland Company remained for some years the biggest paymaster in the Island, bigger even than the Government itself."[43] Although the Reid influence could be felt throughout the Island, it was in the capital city itself where this corporate presence was most keenly felt.

The 1901 Contract, which ended the railway dispute and its internecine battles, has been described as "the end of the initial phase of Newfoundland's development strategy."[44] The focus would now be placed upon the

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[42]Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL), P7/B/19. Reid Newfoundland Company Papers (RNCP). The Reid corporate ventures (as of 1917) included: Newfoundland Timber Estates (1903) - operated sawmills and lumbering operations in central Newfoundland; Newfoundland Products Corp. Ltd. (1915) - pulp and paper, hydro power, and chemical manufacturing operations; Newfoundland-Atlantic Fisheries Ltd. (1917) - processing and exportation of frozen fish to England; St. John's Floating Dry Dock Co. Ltd. (1898) - operations of municipal dry dock facilities.

[43]P.T. McGrath, Newfoundland in 1911, 24.

[44]Hiller, "Railway and Local Politics," 141.

attraction of investment capital (principally foreign) to expand and develop the Island's economy with modern resource industries. In addition, the government sought "to reduce cyclical and periodic swings in personal and national income, and to raise average incomes."[45] For the seasonality of Newfoundland's economy was a major factor inhibiting the stability of an ever-growing rural and urban labour force. On a national scale, there was evidence of growth in new industries. The iron ore mines of Bell Island started operation in 1895, and on a smaller scale several coal mining ventures were attempted in areas such as Grand Lake on the Island's west coast. The ore from Bell Island principally found its way to Nova Scotia steel mills, while overseas exports to Germany formed another important markets.[46] On a smaller scale several coal mining ventures were attempted in areas such as Grand Lake on the Island's west coast. Timber resources attracted foreign investment for logging operations in central Newfoundland in and around Grand Falls, where the British-owned Harmsworth newspaper group established a major paper mill under the Anglo-Newfoundland Development (AND) Company.[47] In 1915, a pulp mill was established at nearby Bishop's Falls by another British firm, A.E. Reed

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[45]Alexander, Decay of Trade, 1.

[46]Amulree Report, 156-58.

[47]Alexander, Atlantic Canada, 9.

and Company.[48]

It was in this first decade of the twentieth century that St. John's fully consolidated its power over the colony's industry and commerce. The demographic picture was rapidly changing during this period. In terms of its urban population, St. John's increased from the 29,594 recorded in the 1901 Census to 34,111 by the 1911 Census, a growth of 15.2 per cent.[49] This expansion caused an increase in the city's labour force of 72.1 per cent during the same period (from 7,505 to 12,923).[50] These labourers were absorbed into a developing secondary manufacturing sector, including some heavy industry. In the ten years between census tallies, the numbers employed in secondary manufacturing rose from 18 per cent of the local labour force (1901) to 26 per cent (1911).[51] The expansion in the heavy industry and service sectors was partially attributable to the location of the Reid Newfoundland Company in the capital city.

In St. John's, Reid Newfoundland was the dominant entity in the transportation and heavy industry sectors of the local economy. The city functioned as the eastern

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[48]Hiller, "The Origins of the Pulp and Paper Industry in Newfoundland," Acadiensis 11 (2) Spring 1982, 42-68.

[49]Newfoundland, Census of Newfoundland and Labrador. 1901, 1911.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid.

railhead and deep water terminus for the Newfoundland Railway and the Reid Company's steamship fleet. As part of the terms of the 1898 and 1901 Contracts, Reid concentrated its operations in the city's west end where a new railway depot was constructed at the site of the Municipal Basin.[52] An extensive range of supply, service, and repair facilities were situated on site, including railway freight and storage sheds, round houses, and general stores.[53] Also located here were the Company's machine, locomotive, car, and dock shops which brought together a wide range of skilled craftsmen and helpers for the construction and maintenance of both marine and railroad stock.[54] "The combined dry dock and machine shop was far and away the largest heavy metal operation in the city by 1913, employing over 130 tradesmen, labourers, and

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[52]Penney, "Newfoundland Railway," 487.

[53]Ibid.

[54]P.T. McGrath, Newfoundland in 1911, 69. McGrath wrote that in the Reid machine shops: "boilers are built, marine and locomotive engines constructed, and all parts and fittings for steamers and railway cars are made and repaired. . . . .The Company now builds its own freight vans and passenger coaches, including sleeping and dining cars; and has undertaken in its latest contract to build the locomotives and every other class of rolling stock required in the operation of the whole railroad. This, as might be imagined, calls for the employment of an army of skilled mechanics and other operatives." Although McGrath often engaged in Newfoundland "boosterism," if his description is accurate it describes a major railroad operation in St. John's.

management personnel."[55] This total was to rise dramatically during the wartime period of economic growth. A more detailed breakdown of Reid Newfoundland's St. John's-based labour force may be obtained from Company records from which a conservative estimate would place the number of workers employed (in May 1918) at between 1000-1200.[56] This figure excludes several of the Company's ventures in the city, such as the major cold storage plant for processing fresh fish, which would push the Reid-employed work force even higher. Given these numbers, Reid Newfoundland clearly emerges as the city's major industrial employer. Available census data lacks specific job classifications and gender divisions, but an approximate calculation based on this evidence suggests that the Company employed nearly 25 per cent of the St. John's male labour force during this period.[57] [See Tables 1, 2]

The advent of the Reid Newfoundland Company with its monopoly on the colony's transportation system and

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[55]John Joy, "The Growth and Development of Trades and Manufacturing in St. John's, 1870-1914," unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977, 149.

[56]PANL, P7/B/19, (files 365-410) RNCP. 2847 workers employed in the total operations of the Reid Newfoundland Company as of May 1918.

[57]Census, 1911, 1921. There are no figures available for 1918, but using census data from 1911 and 1921 some indication may be gained of the significance of the St. John's labour force. The population of the city is given as 31,257 (1911) and 37,823 (1921) with a total labour force of 12,923 and 13,213 respectively.

extensive interests in resource development projects introduced a new reality to the Island's work force. Instead of dealing with relatively small-scale business firms involved in modestly capitalized companies, workers now had to contend with the "Reid Octopus," a corporation which was both vertically and horizontally integrated in a broad spectrum of ventures. Labour's response was to face this new challenge with a new form of union. They chose an industrial union which would unite the diverse skills of city workers under one umbrella organization.[58] This was to lead to the culmination of a major phase for labour and working-class history in Newfoundland, one that marked a high water point for union organization which bridged the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The development of the St. John's local economy also signalled that these economic transformations would be contested by labour and capital. While the steady expansion of the Reid Newfoundland Company's holdings in the city signalled

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[58]Compared to the Canadian experience with railway shopcrafts, the Newfoundland Railway appears to have made less use of the methods often used to fragment the workforce employed in large shop environments. Lacking such obstacles as extensive company rules and regulations, job incentives, and artificial hierarchies, Newfoundland railway workers encountered less barriers in the formation of an industrial union. For an analysis of early Canadian railways see, Paul Craven and Tom Traves, "Dimensions of Paternalism: Discipline and Culture in Canadian Railway Operations int he 1850s," in On The Job: Confronting the Labour Process in Canada. Ed. Craig Heron and Robert Storey (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), 47-53.

a new stage in its economic development, St. John's was first and foremost a commercial seaport and thus most of its labour force toiled on the waterfront.

Employment on the city waterfront centred around the fish export industry directed by the large mercantile firms situated along Water Street. At the turn of the century several thousand dockside workers found employment in a wide range of maritime activities either as craftsmen or "unskilled" labourers. Census divisions preclude exact labour force analysis as almost half of the St. John's workers were classed in an amorphous category designated as "other." [See Table 1] Approximately 25 per cent of the work force were described as mechanics or craftsmen and factory operatives engaged in the trades and secondary manufacturing sectors. A portion of these craftsmen would have been employed on the city's waterfront. Maritime crafts included: riggers, blockmakers, shipwrights, and caulkers who were all involved in work related to wooden-hulled vessels. While the demand for maritime tonnage during World War I gave some of these crafts a temporary reprieve, most of these occupations were steadily giving way to metal working skills associated with modern steel-hulled steamers.[59] Although craftsmen tended to be in demand on a more regular basis than unskilled labourers,

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[59]Newfoundland Board of Trade, Annual Report, 1917, 14.

all waterfront workers were regulated by the seasonality of employment opportunities. This generally meant that the fall and spring seasons were periods of peak activity, while other months were extremely slack.[60] Seasonality was especially notable amongst unskilled dockside labourers.

This "unskilled" category would include dockworkers (longshoremen, fish handlers, barrowmen); transport workers (truckers, carters, teamsters, sailors); and general labourers (helpers).[61] Compounding the insecurity of seasonal work was the factor of casualness, that is the use of men on a day to day basis. Steamship firms and merchants aware of the capital invested in modern steamers and specialized dockside equipment, as well as tight delivery schedules and expensive harbour dues placed an increasingly heavy emphasis on a quick turn around of company vessels.[62] This arrangement demanded the maintenance of a large pool of surplus labour to stand ready to service steamers the moment they arrived in port. Wartime conditions served to redouble this pressure as worldwide demands for shipping raised company profits. The casual system also attracted a fluctuating number of transient workers from outport communities which employers

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[60]Chisholm, "Hang Her Down," 34-35.

[61]Ibid., 35-39.

[62]Ibid., 35.

often used to undercut the bargaining position of regular workers in terms of wages and working conditions. Added to this mix of casual labourers were the various jobs either on, or closely related to, the waterfront. Freight transferred from a ship's hold to the warehouse by barrowmen would then be distributed to city businesses by truckmen or teamsters. Others worked as fish graders ("cutters"), while more toiled as fish handlers ("yafflers"). Still others, such as clerks, would owe their jobs to waterfront operations. The result was a group of craftsmen, unskilled workers, city and rural men and boys all struggling to wrest a livelihood from the city's maritime commerce.

The seasonal and casual nature of the harbour makes the calculation of jobs problematic, but some idea of the numbers involved and the growth over time may be obtained from the development of waterfront unions. The Longshoremen's Protective Union (LSPU), originally known as the Steamboat Labourers' Protective Union, was organized in 1903. This union "extended its membership to all wharf labourers as well as to small groups of manual workers in the city."[63] From 1903 to 1914, its membership grew from 200 to 2600, although these numbers only include a small percentage of members who found regular employment.[64] "In

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[63] Ibid., 36.

[64] Ibid.

1914, 500 men in the 2600 member LSPU (20 per cent) were permanent employees with mercantile firms; they were generally older, familiar hands, employed ten hours a week, and paid weekly."[65] Despite the fact that in 1914 the St. John's economy was slightly depressed, the LSPU's membership statistics appeared to have remained fairly stable throughout the war period.[66] Other major unions included: the Journeymen's Coopers' Union (with 350 members), the Firemen's Protective Union (FPU) a union of marine firemen and stokers, as well as some stationary firemen, and the Truckmen's Protective Union (TPU) which had organized most of the city's teamsters. Collectively, the assembly of waterfront workers in St. John's formed a section of the general work force which was critical both to the national and local economy. Here as well co-existed differing forms of capitalist development. The tradrtional fish merchants shared the port location and its labour force with firms such as Reid Newfoundland Company, an example of monopoly capital. This variation in economic organization also extended to the secondary manufacturing industries which were expanding in this period.

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[65] Ibid., 34.

[66] As of late 1917 the L.S.P.U. had a "paid-up" membership of 2,500. See "Labor Organizations in Newfoundland," The Christmas Echo, vol. 2, (St. John's: Herald Publishing Co., 1917), 16-17.

Secondary manufacturing accounted for 18 per cent of the St. John's labour force in 1901 and this rose to 26 per cent by 1911.[67] This percentage growth obscures the fact that the number of workers engaged in this sector actually doubled during this decade. Much of this growth was due to extensive tariff protections and special legislation designed to encourage diversification in manufacturing. The local economy was in a period of transition, moving from small-scale craft operations to large factories. By 1914, 80 per cent of the St. John's industrial work force was employed in large firms as there was a gradual growth in the production of consumer goods.[68] Employment opportunities for women expanded while men found work in tanneries, iron foundries, breweries, and carriage works. The clothing industry by 1914 was the largest employer in the secondary manufacturing sector next to heavy industry.[69] The boot and shoe industry was also gaining greater importance as well.

On the eve of World War I, the Newfoundland economy remained limited to several primary resource industries, the major one being the fishery. The economy retained its

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[67]Census, 1901, 1911.

[68]Joy, "The Growth and Development of Trades," 213. Joy defines a "large firm" as one having five or more employees.

[69]Nancy Forestell, "'Holding On': St. John's Working Women, 1921," unpublished paper, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1986, 4.

seasonal nature and as a result rarely offered steady year round employment for either urban or rural workers. Various attempts to modernize and diversify the Island achieved only a mixed record of success and had substantially contributed to the public debt. The most ambitious of these schemes was the construction of a transinsular railway. It was this venture which first lured Robert G. Reid and his family to this North Atalntic colony. To this task, Reid applied his considerable business acumen, and in return, secured a wide range of concessions which created a second financial elite independent of the fishery. The new men of Water Street channelled their considerable financial resources into business projects that were intended to broaden Newfoundland's limited economic base. One consequence of these developments was the concentration of industrial workers, both skilled and unskilled, into the large workplace environments of the Reid Company. In this changing economic climate these workers would unite to form an organization, large and diverse enough to challenge the corporate might of the Reid family.

Chapter Two

A Crisis of Confidence: The World War I Years

On 4 August 1914, the British Empire was at war with Imperial Germany. As befitted Britain's "oldest and most loyal colony," the news of war was received with an outpouring of patriotic fervour in St. John's.[1] Yet before the war would eventually grind to a halt more than four years later, Newfoundlanders would experience profound changes in their society. The price of war would eventually tally 1,200 deaths, 2,800 wounded, and a monetary cost estimated at $16 million.[2] The European war altered the local economy in several ways: it revealed a crisis in local and national leadership which shook the confidence of many, and it left St. John's business and social elite widely discredited as a result of Water Street's zeal for wartime profiteering. An examination into these aspects of the St. John's political economy demonstrates how pervasive this exploitation was, and how damaging these activities were to a working class left unprotected from inflationary upheaval and victimized by wartime patriotism. These events exacerbated existing

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[1]Noel, Politics, 120.

[2]C.A. Sharpe, "Enlistment in the Armed Forces of Newfoundland, 1914-1918," research material compiled for the Historical Atlas of Canada, Vol. III, forthcoming 1989; H.M. Mosdell, 500 Facts About Newfoundland (St. John's: Trade Printers, 1922), 514. The colony's population in 1911 was 242,619.

class conflicts, raising them into something approaching a conscious class struggle.[3]

Initially, news of the European war brought a mood of uncertainty and apprehension to St. John's businessmen. Rumours of layoffs and plant closings circulated as citizens discussed the effects a heavy military enlistment might have on the local labour force.[4] Newfoundland was caught in an economic slump during 1913 and 1914 as fluctuating foreign exchange rates handicapped the export of staple products. At the outbreak of hostilities the British placed an embargo on merchant ships entering the Mediterranean region and this decision had immediate and serious implications for Newfoundland's saltfish trade. Then the British Navy, claiming that it could not provide adequate protection for Allied vessels, sought to exclude Newfoundland ships from the entire Atlantic War Zone until Canadian and American authorities "adopted" the colony's steamships. This arrangement allowed for the continued export of saltfish to vital markets in Portugal and Spain, although shipments to Italy, and particularly, Greece

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[3]James E. Cronin, "Labour Insurgency and Class Conflict," Social Science History, 4 (1) Winter 1980, 125-52.

[4]Patricia R. O'Brien, "The Newfoundland Patriotic Association," unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1982, 32.

remained hampered.[5] Problems related to wartime shipping continued to plague Newfoundland throughout this period as the colony was forced to administer its maritime affairs without the active cooperation of a British government increasingly preoccupied with homefront concerns. As the war progressed, Newfoundland began to feel the serious effects of tonnage diversions. Prior to the war, the Island had been serviced by five British and North American steamship lines linking St. John's to important centres on the eastern seaboard and the British west coast. By 1915, only the Furness-Withy Line remained, operating on a reduced schedule with only half of its original six vessels.[6] This situation led to drastic freight rate increases which by 1918 had risen to 600 per cent above their prewar level.[7] "War insurance" rates also contributed to shipping costs. These conditions placed tremendous pressure on Newfoundland's own merchant fleet to compensate for some of the lost tonnage capacity. This was especially true in 1918 when Newfoundland found it impossible to secure any space at all for its goods on

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[5]Newfoundland Board of Trade, Annual Report, 1917, 3-4.

[6]McGrath, Newfoundland in 1911, 268-71; Daily News (St. John's), 26 January 1916.

[7]Newfoundland Board of Trade, Annual Report, 1918, 14.

British ships travelling to Europe.[8] Time and again this lack of available tonnage left Newfoundland unable to capitalize on a strong worldwide demand for its staple products. Despite wartime complications, the colony was poised to benefit substantially from thriving market conditions in the saltfish industry, and as well in local secondary manufacturing. Yet in a disastrously short-sighted move, Water Street put their own interests above the colony's, and began to conduct negotiations with foreign brokers which would dispose of the Island's modern steel-hulled steamships -- thereby placing control of maritime shipping into the hands of outsiders. What remained were the less efficient wooden-hulled vessels used on the coastal freight routes.

Probably no other issue accentuated the disparity between Water Street capitalists and the Island's working class more than did the matter of wartime trade and tonnage problems. "The jugular vein of the Newfoundland economy was tonnage."[9] The island economy could not expect to function smoothly without the adequate provision of food and supplies, nor to stay afloat without a steady revenue derived from exporting its staple products. In addition to the saltfish markets in Europe and the Caribbean, Newfoundland depended on shipping for its other

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[8] Ibid., 14-15.

[9] O'Brien, "NPA," 235.

major resource industries. Bell Island iron ore, already suffering from the loss of German sales, demanded tonnage as did the pulp and paper mills at Grand Falls and Bishop's Falls. The failure of Water Street merchants to cope with the exigencies of wartime transportation, coupled with their refusal to curtail their greed, resulted in an upheaval of the shipping system that deprived the colony of its most critical requirements. This situation also threatened to undermine any growth in local secondary manufacturing as these industries depended upon imported raw materials and machinery.[10] The immediate result of this chaos was to send the price of basic commodities on an upward spiral which in turn caused the working-class living standards to plummet. Widespread animosity was directed at Water Street merchants by those whose incomes could not readily absorb these price increases.

The primary reason for the tonnage problems was the decision of St. John's businessmen to dispose of their steamship fleets early in the war. Gambling on a short-term conflict, these merchants liquidated almost their entire fleet of modern steel-hulled steamships. Many of these vessels found their way into the hands of the Russian government for use in the Baltic Sea.[11] The

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[10]Joy, "Trades and Manufacturing," 54 and passim.

[11]Daily News, 21 December 1916.

outcome of these transactions was a windfall profit for Water Street interests and a serious threat to the Newfoundland economy.

The first to capitalize on this international demand for steamships was the Reid Newfoundland Company with the sale of the Lintrose and Bruce. These recently commissioned ships formed the backbone of Reid's route running between Port-aux-Basques and North Sydney and their loss resulted in chronic freight congestion at both terminals for the duration of the war.[12] This served to exacerbate the overloading of a trans-insular railway system attempting to cope with wartime freight volumes. "It was estimated that only one-third of the total food requirements could be brought in by rail," and anything which hampered this marginal supply had serious ramifications throughout the colony.[13] A consortium of Water Street interests known as the Venture Steamship Company whose shareholders included a broad selection of influential politicians and businessmen moved quickly to dispose of the vessels Adventure, Belladventure, and Bonaventure.[14] Job Brothers, another long-established merchant firm sold

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[12]PANL, RNCP, Correspondence, Box 8 (1917-1918).

[13]O'Brien, "NPA," 235.

[14]Ibid., 239. The Venture Steamship Company shareholders included many prominent St. John's businessmen, most of whom were also members of the Board of Trade. Newfoundland Board of Trade, 1915-1918 List of Members.

off the Nascopie and Beothic.[15] Another steamer, the Iceland, fell to the auctioneers even before it left its Clydeside dry dock.[16] In its annual summation for 1915 the Evening Telegram sadly noted, "the year that is now passing has witnessed the departure of our steel fleet."[17] Now only two steamers, the Florizel and Stephano, remained to connect St. John's with North American ports. Before war's end both of these ships would be lost leaving local firms madly scrambling to secure replacements.[18] This situation also forced the removal of steamers from the colony's coastal service and the return of antiquated wooden-hulled ships as a stopgap measure. The action of the St. John's ship owners was but one segment of the story of Newfoundland's experience with war profiteering. The loss of the local fleet soon began to have implications which highlighted the inequalities of wartime service between the Water Street cadre and those who laboured to provide the means for their wealth.

One of the most significant and telling developments

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[15] O'Brien, "NPA," 239.

[16] Ibid., 14.

[17] Evening Telegram (St. John's), 31 December 1915.

[18] The Stephano was torpedoed by the German submarine U-53 on 8 October 1916; the Florizel ran aground off Cappahayden, Ferryland District on 24 February 1918. The loss of the Florizel forced the use of two coastal steamers, the Portia and Prospero, on the St. John's - New York route further hindering coastal schedules. See, Newfoundland Board of Trade. Annual Report, 1918, 22.

in relation to war profiteering was the disruption and price fixing of the St. John's coal supply. As historian Patricia O'Brien comments:

> Up to the end of 1915 it had generally been conceded that high costs and scarcities reflected wartime conditions. But at the beginning of 1916 irrefutable evidence came to light which indicated the existence of monopolistic rings. The coal issue proved beyond question that major Water Street merchants were using their control over importing, wholesale and retail trades to exact the highest possible margin of profit.[19]

The fact that these merchants were operating in this manner with the complicity of the government of Edward P. Morris was undeniable given the incestuous nature of the commercial and political world of Newfoundland.[20] Prices jumped from $1.80 to $4 per ton, and later up to $13 per ton.[21] Many beneficiaries of the inflated coal price were the same men who had brought on the shortages by selling off the steamships needed to ensure an adequate supply.[22] Eventually the government was forced to intervene by aiding the import of new coal supplies and by fixing a ceiling on the market value. Before the matter was resolved angry citizens had demanded that the government

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[19] O'Brien, "NPA," 240.

[20] Ibid., 275.

[21] Ibid., 241.

[22] Ibid., 240.

seize coal stocks and put an end to the price gouging practices of city merchants.[23]

Like coal, salt was another basic commodity of critical importance to the national economy which was in short supply by 1915. Without salt, the cod fishery was threatened with a major disaster. During the war saltfish exports rose dramatically reflecting both an increased market demand and an abundant natural supply [See Table 2]. The opportunities now presented to Newfoundland producers would go for naught without adequate salt imports from Spain needed to cure the catch. Ironically, the Newfoundland Board of Trade cried out for government intervention to ensure that these imports would be brought in at a fair market price.[24] Once again the transparent nature of the business-government axis was openly displayed. Strong evidence suggested that salt prices were artificially inflated and for most citizens it was "impossible to avoid the conclusion that the government was working hand-in-hand with the commercial establishment."[25] While the sordid tales of war profiteering continued to mount, World War I was actively transforming the St. John's economy in other areas as the demand for

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[23] Ibid., 242.

[24] Newfoundland Board of Trade, Annual Report, 1917, 8.

[25] O'Brien, "NPA," 275.

manufactured goods, and the workers to produce them, increased rapidly.

Wartime conditions were exerting a profound influence on local conditions in several sectors. The steady drain of men into the military ranks opened up numerous jobs, many or which were filled by women. By February 1916, the capital city had contributed over 1,300 men to the branches of military.[26] This total would climb to 2,600 by the Armistice. These recruits represented nearly 30 per cent of the St. John's male population (17 years of age and over). The city remained a focus of patriotic fervour throughout the conflict, and possessed the highest enlistment rate in the colony.[27] Even so, as the war progressed, the rate of enlistment failed to re-supply the Royal Newfoundland Regiment overseas, and after much political debate conscription was introduced on 11 May 1918. The result of conscription was to further reduce the male work force in the city. This situation placed both the skilled and unskilled labourers who remained in an advantageous position. The point was not lost on the city's organized labour and union workers became increasingly restless in the face of blatant war profiteering and a soaring cost-of-living.

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[26]Statistics compiled by C.A. Sharpe and J. Chisholm for Historical Atlas of Canada, Vol. III, forthcoming 1989.

[27]Ibid., Table 7, 15.

The transformation of the local economy begun in the late nineteenth century received considerable impetus during the war years. This was especially true in secondary manufacturing. In the fall of 1915, the Newfoundland Shell Company was established by local business interests to manufacture 4.5 inch High Explosive shells for the British military.[28] Although this factory consistently failed to meet production quotas and quality standards, it did provide a large number of new jobs for the local economy. The total number of employees is uncertain, but over 100 female operatives were involved in the production of these munitions until May 1918 when the facility closed.[29] The use of a large female work force as unskilled or semi-skilled operatives probably introduced elements of Taylorism and craft dilution into this range of metal working skills in a manner comparable to the North American wartime example. Certainly this munitions factory experienced labour problems throughout its lifespan.[30]

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[28]PANL, RNCP, Box 8 (1917-1918). Some of the major shareholders included: F.W. Angel, James Angel, Reid Newfoundland Company, M.G. Winter, R.K. Bishop, R.F. Horwood, S.O. Steele, Harvey and Company, and other prominent Water Street businessmen/politicians.

[29]A reference in the Daily Star, 4 May 1918, placed the factory's workforce at 120 employees. When the operation closed that month, reprots indicated that it contained "$25,000 worth of modern metal working machinery."

[30]For further details, see Chapter 5.

Other ventures attested to the rapid growth in the St. John's economy. One such project was the Newfoundland-Atlantic Fisheries Limited (incorporated 1917). This plant financed by the Reid Newfoundland Company absorbed another Reid operation (the Newfoundland Cold Storage Fresh Fish Corporation Ltd. in December 1917).[31] The company was involved in the processing and exporting of frozen fish to Britain, and also imported poultry, beef, and pork into the country. The cold storage plant was capable of processing up to 20,000 lbs. of fish daily, reportedly making it one of the largest such facilities on the eastern seaboard.[32] The plant employed over 100 men and women workers in this period.[33]

The clothing industry was another major growth area in the local economy during World War I. Two clothing factories, the Semi-Ready Clothing Company and the White Clothing Company, began operations in 1917 and 1918 respectively.[34] Several other firms increased their capacities as steady orders pouring in. The Newfoundland Clothing Company reported an increase of 75 per cent in

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[31] PANL, RNCP, Box 8, Correspondence 1917-1918.

[32] Newfoundland Board of Trade, Annual Reports, 1917-1918; Commercial Annual (St. John's) 1921, 17-19.

[33] "Newfoundland-Atlantic Fisheries Ltd.," Commercial Annual, 1921, 17-21.

[34] "The Semi-Ready Clothing Factory," Commercial Annual, 1917, 32; Evening Telegram, 15 April 1918.

production during the war, largely due to a government contract to supply uniforms for the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. Another established firm, the British Clothing Company, also indicated an increase in their production of nearly 50 per cent.[35] Still another company, a woolen mill, which was foundering before the war, was running at full capacity by 1916. The cumulative effect of this tremendous expansion in the clothing industry meant widespread employment for local workers, the majority of whom were women operatives.[36] Figures are less exact for other St. John's industries, such as the boot and shoe, tobacco, and confectionery/bakery firms, but tentative evidence suggests substantial growth in these areas as well.

Wartime growth was also experienced in the transportation and heavy industry sectors. The volume of freight being moved to and from the colony increased dramatically. The Newfoundland Railway went from 161,911 tons (1913-14) to 224,708 tons (1918-19).[37] The St. John's waterfront was kept busy filling contracts to refit and repair local and foreign vessels. The result of this activity was a

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[35]"Newfoundland Clothing Factory," Commercial Annual, 1916, 41; "British Clothing Factory," Ibid., 35.

[36]Nancy Forestell, "Working Women in St. John's, 1920-1940," M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, forthcoming 1987.

[37]Newfoundland, Journals of the House of Assembly, 1914-1919.

burgeoning labour force in these areas and a significant, if temporary, shift away from the chronic seasonality of the prewar economy. Workers with craft skills now found themselves wielding greater influence in contract negotiations than had been the case for many years. Meanwhile, the engine of the Newfoundland economy, the saltfish industry, was enjoying some of its best years on record. The Evening Telegram noted that "the fisheries for 1917 were perhaps the best in the history of Newfoundland."[38] This assessment was seconded by the Newfoundland Board of Trade as it summed up the country's general economic standing near the end of the war:

> The volume of the trade of the Dominion, both with regard to quantity and value, for the fiscal year ended 30th, June 1918, far exceeded any previous year in the history of the Dominion.[39]

The Board of Trade went on to suggest that the last years of the war had been "phenomenally successful," both in terms of the fishery and exports in general.[40] This general mood of optimism was not shared by all, for the wealth generated by wartime conditions failed to be equally distributed. Instead of benefitting from this buoyant economy most members of the city's working class

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[38] Evening Telegram, 31 December 1917.

[39] Newfoundland Board of Trade, Annual Report, 1918, 4.

[40] Ibid.

experienced severe hardship.

By early 1917, rampant speculation in foodstuffs and imported commodities was disrupting working-class life in St. John's. The city's labour groups clamoured for an official investigation into war profiteering. Newspapers carried letters which bitterly denounced government and business leaders for their lack of restraint.[41] In a letter forwarded to Prime Minister Morris, the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association (NIWA) contrasted the sacrifices of the enlisted soldiers to the avarice of the merchants:

> The working classes are bearing the burden placed on them by this great and terrible war, while blood and treasure are being 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 that burden and take out of the mouths of mothers and children the very bread to secure which our soldiers and sailors suffer and die.[42]

To illustrate this point the Association submitted a typical budget under which a working-class family was forced to exist. In it a worker receiving $3 per day and supporting a family of eight found himself 32 cents short of the necessary income needed to provide the most basic of menus, housing rental and daily school fees. This

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[41] Evening Telegram, 10 June 1917.

[42] PANL, GN 8/3, W.F. Lloyd Papers. Letter from NIWA Secretary, Maurice H. Hitchen to Prime Minister Edward P. Morris, 22 June 1917.

budget excluded the costs of "wearing apparel, doctor's bills, church dues, patriotic collections, and lots of other things too numerous to mention."[43] In addition, these calculations were only made for the working week and did not provide for Sundays. The NIWA was not alone in calling for a halt to retail price increases in St. John's. Wage and price data for the World War I period are incomplete, but what survives clearly describes the unstable conditions which then existed. Evidence collected by the Department of Justice provides a detailed breakdown of retail prices between 1914 and 1919. [See Appendices 3, 4]. On the average, retail food prices had doubled or trebled during this period. Basic household commodities such as: sugar (+116 per cent), milk (+100 per cent), molasses (+133 per cent), beef (+155 per cent), and pork (+125 per cent) had contributed to the climbing rate of inflation. For some items the increase was even more dramatic: cabbage (+400 per cent), rolled oats (+350 per cent), tea (+1650 per cent).[44] Home heating and cooking fuels also reflected this steep increase with a gallon of kerosene showing a rise of 66 per cent. Coal went up by 183 per cent, despite the fact that the

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[43] Ibid., letter from NIWA Executive Committee to Prime Minister W.F. Lloyd entitled, "Some reasons why we want a raise," 29 January 1918.

[44] PANL, GN 13/1, Box 155, Department of Justice. Newfoundland Constabulary, Inspector General's Office.

government had been forced to intervene and regulate supplies by 1916.[45] Items of clothing and dry goods also increased by at least 100 per cent over the war years.[46]

In a barrage of correspondence directed at the government and the Newfoundland Board of Trade the NIWA demanded an inquiry into war profiteering and the formation of a Board of Food Control along the lines of the Canadian and British models. Organized labour was troubled by the thought that the government would form an investigating body which would be dominated by Water Street representatives who would be reticent about presenting an objective report of true market conditions. In a resolution passed on to the prime minister, the NIWA requested a Board of Food Control consisting of "not less than 15 members ... [with] two-thirds of the persons appointed to the Board to be members of Trades, Labour, Fishermen and other industrial organizations."[47] Finally the Morris government was forced to bow to public pressure and on 23 April 1917, it formed a commission to investigate the high cost of living.[48] Ignoring labour's demands for representation, Colonial Secretary, J.R.

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] PANL, GN 8/3, letter from NIWA Executive Committee, 22 June 1917.

[48] PANL, GN 9/1, Proceedings of the Executive Council, 23 April 1917.

Bennett appointed a five-member body which was notable for its compatibility with the interest of St. John's merchants. It consisted of H.W. LeMessurier, Charles H. Hutchings, W.J. Ellis, T.A. Hall, and Chairman, P.T. McGrath.[49] The commission's mandate sounded fairly innocuous. It was to "inquire and report" on the price of food and household commodities and to "suggest what steps, if any, should be taken" to improve conditions.[50] Despite the government's attempts to establish a commission which would be sympathetic to Water Street, local merchants were decidedly uneasy about what might be uncovered. Soon their fears were to be confirmed.

The High Cost of Living Committee issued a series of six interim reports, which were released between 2 May and 21 August 1917. Each report dealt with a group of commodities in terms of the freight costs and retail prices, and made recommendations for improvements. The

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[49] Ibid., LeMessurier was Deputy Minister of Customs, Charles H. Hutchings, Deputy Minister of Justice, T.A. Hall was Government Engineer, and W.J. Ellis, a building contractor. Ellis was a former mayor of St. John's (1910-1914) and had business interests in the city. His name appears on the list of shareholders of the Venture Steamship Company in December 1915. Patrick T. McGrath was the Director of the St. John's Evening Herald and President of the Legislative Council. He served on an extensive range of government boards and Commissions, including the Newfoundland Patriotic Committee formed to direct the colony's war effort. Commission members received $300 each ($400 for the chairman) for their services.

[50] PANL, GN 2/5 - 319 A/B, letter from Colonial Secretary J.R. Bennett to P.T. McGrath, 25 April 1917.

results of each report were printed verbatim in the St. John's dailies thus ensuring wide dissemination of the findings. The first two installments, dealing with coal and vegetables, were in the main uncontroversial as they sidestepped the issue of market speculation on the part of local merchants. The coal situation had reached its crisis point earlier in the war forcing the government to introduce regulations. If Water Street felt that they might avoid recrimination, the third interim report removed any chance for an escape. Released on 1 June 1917, this installment dealt with the "question of flour" and it sent tremors reverberating throughout the city. Finally there was an official statement confirming what had been obvious for so long -- for some people war was a paying proposition. The freight rates charged by Reid Newfoundland Company for shipping flour from North Sydney to St. John's had jumped by $1.09 - $1.28 per barrel, or 600 per cent since 1914.[51] In comparison, rates between Montreal and Nova Scotia had risen by 2 cents to 4 cents per barrel since the war began. Reid's competitors, the Furness Withy Line and the Red Cross Line, had increased their rates between 300 and 400 per cent during the same time for shipments from Halifax and New York.[52] The

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[51] Ibid., High Cost Living Commission, third interim report, 1 June 1917.

[52] Ibid.

commissioners could find no justification for these high costs and recommended that the government apply the "blue-book" rates on all British vessels in the Newfoundland trade.[53] The report went on to quote Bonar Law, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had stated in the House of Commons that, "there is no trade probably which has made such big profits during the war as the Shipping Trade."[54] This was the commission's thinly veiled comment on the behaviour of the colony's merchants. But the report did not stop there.

Dealers were accused of hoarding their supplies and of charging the highest possible rates for their flour, even if it was older stock brought in at much lower prices. Acting in collusion, city flour importers schemed to drive prices for this most ubiquitous of Newfoundland staples steadily upward. What this meant in terms of a profit margin was startling. Flour that fetched a margin of 75 cents per barrel in 1914, was now being sold for a return of up to $5.00 per barrel in 1917.[55] Despite the claims of merchants that they only sought to preserve a "proper equilibrium" between wholesale and retail costs,

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[53]Blue book rates were rates fixed by the Admiralty and applied to all vessels carrying goods under consignment to the British government. See O'Brien, "N.P.A. and the War Effort," 257.

[54]High Cost of Living Commission, third interim report, June 1917.

[55]Ibid.

and that these profits would serve to cushion any subsequent losses due to further freight increases, the public mood was in favour of strict government intervention. Ignoring calls to commandeer supplies, the commission recommended placing the importation of flour, along with other foodstuffs, under a Board of Food Control.[56] In summation, the commission stated:

> We feel confident that if the ordinary ebb and flow of unrestricted competition existed in this Colony for the past year, flour would have been sold at a much lower rate, and we think it is regrettable that this system of price-fixing to 'follow the markets' should have been put in operation resulting in so heavy a burden having been placed on the classes in the community least able to bear it.[57]

Certainly the St. John's working class did not require a commission of business worthies to inform them of the existence of war profiteering, yet these reports demonstrated just how widespread was this practice. The NIWA termed it "legalized robbery" and called upon the government to act decisively to remedy the situation.[58]

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[56]This Board of Food Control was established under the War Measures Act with powers similar to those boards in other Allied nations.

[57]Ibid., see also CO 194/297, Governor Harris notes in his regular dispatch to the Colonial Office that "Newfoundlanders are among the most copious and fastidious consumers of flour in the western hemisphere," quoted in O'Brien, "NPA," 297.

[58]PANL, GN 8/3, Lloyd papers, letter from M.H. Hitchen to E.P. Morris, 22 June 1917.

The commission's fourth interim report was issued on 20 July 1917, and it was concerned with salt meat, tea, sugar, and molasses. Again the investigations revealed blatant price gouging, this time in salt meat and molasses. As with flour, freight rates had undergone drastic increases of up to 500 per cent and retail profit margins of 100 to 400 per cent. Dealers invoked the same set of excuses for these returns that they used in the case of flour, but by now it was obvious to all that matters had been left to the merchants for far too long. As the commissioners themselves dryly noted: "The result is that under conditions such as have applied here since the war began, and especially during the past year, the opportunities for making large profits have been utilized very fully and the public has had to pay considerably more."[59] The High Cost of Living Commission recommended several reforms. First, a Food Control Board should be instituted to ensure supplies of food were imported to Newfoundland to meet public demand and to control profiteering. Second, an "Excess Profits Tax as already adopted by Great Britain, Canada, and the United States."[60] The realization that such a tax was inevitable was beginning to dawn upon Water Street.

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[59]High Cost of Living Commission, fourth interim report, 12 July 1917.

[60]Ibid., third interim report.

The concerted voice of public opinion made its presence felt not only to the commission, but also in the House of Assembly. The National government (a coalition formed in July 1917) moved on 26 July to introduce legislation designed to establish a tax on war profiteering. After considerable delay, the Business Profits Tax was passed unanimously by the House on 2 August 1917.[61] Water Street interests quickly swung into action and lobbied to have the measure quashed in the Legislative Council (Newfoundland's upper house). On 8 August, in an unprecedented rejection of a "money bill" approved by the lower house, the measure was blocked by the Council. In the ensuing constitutional crisis public opinion was firmly placed behind the government. The daily press decried the city's mercantile interests for attempting to avoid taxation at a time when the colony was being forced to consider the conscription of men into military service.[62] The obvious hypocrisy of a social elite who favoured the conscription of manpower, but not wealth, raised public resentment. When the House reconvened on 16 August, the bill was again introduced, this time with another measure designed to eliminate the Legislative

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[61]The initial proposal was for a tax of 25 per cent on incomes over $2,000, but was altered to a 20 per cent tax on incomes over $3,000.

[62]Daily News, 7, 8 August 1917; Evening Telegram, 9 August 1917.

Council's power to reject a money bill.[63] The incident, coming when it did, demonstrated the dichotomy between the St. John's merchants and its working class and how the former group were not prepared to make tangible sacrifices for the war effort. Yet the powerful force of wartime rhetoric had been successfully re-directed to pressure these businessmen into accepting some responsibility for the war instead of simply committing others for overseas service. A resolution passed by the NIWA approving income taxes affirmed this view, "So that flesh and blood shall not bear the burden of the war alone, but that wealth be compelled to bear its full share."[64]

The new Excess Profits Tax placed $640,451 into the public coffers in fiscal year 1917-1918, and nearly $1 million in 1918-1919.[65] In 1918, the government finally enacted the first personal income tax in Newfoundland. This measure brought returns of $49,882 (1917-1918) and $64,537 (1918-1919).[66] These figures served to vindicate labours' contention that the considerable profits generated by the war had hitherto not been contributing to Newfoundland's war effort. In his regular dispatch to the Colonial Office, Governor Walter E. Davidson noted that

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[63] Evening Telegram, 16 August 1917.

[64] Ibid., 7 July 1917.

[65] Newfoundland Yearbook, 1919, 364.

[66] Ibid.

there was a strong sense of resentment against Water Street for the way they had handled their affairs. Writing to British M.P. Walter H. Long, Davidson wondered whether the Excess Profits Tax would prove useful as only the long-established merchant firms kept "business-like accounts," therefore leaving the casual speculator unencumbered because "his transactions are 'on the nod' and can be concealed."[67] Davidson's successor, Alexander Harris, also reported to England that the burdens of war were not being borne on an equal basis by all members of the colony. Harris wrote, "the prime minister explained to me that there was a considerable number of rather large incomes in Newfoundland practically contributing nothing at all towards the cost of the war."[68] Throughout the colony citizens were expressing their anger at the betrayal by a political and economic ruling class which had proved itself manifestly inadequate to the task of directing the country in such a crisis. All of the commissions and reports stated one salient fact, "that many who administered the war effort on one hand were reaping unconscionable war profits on the other."[69] It was this system of "cronyism" that the working people of

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[67]CO 194, Governor W.E. Davidson to Colonial Secretary Walter H. Long, 31 July 1917.

[68]CO 194, Governor A. Harris, in his monthly report to the Colonial Office.

[69]O'Brien, "N.P.A. and the War Effort," 278.

St. John's sought to escape. As one union member put it, "the slavery of greed" burdened the worker.[70]

Protesting St. John's labour groups raised the issue of poor urban housing conditions as another example of the class divisions between rich and poor. The war served to heighten an already serious housing crisis in the capital city. In a speech before the House of Assembly, the MHA for St. John's East W.J. Higgins commented at length on housing:

> There has never in the history of St. John's been such a terrible shortage of houses. I may state to the House now that the actual fact of the matter in that there are hundreds of houses too few.... The way the matter stands now is that if a workman in St. John's gets notice to get out, he can't get another house, and the result is that there are houses with four or five families living in them. These men are industrious workmen, mechanics, and men working regularly as labourers.[71]

Many families were often "getting notice" as city landlords sought to take advantage of a strong economy and raise rental rates. In 1918, estimates placed the number of St. John's residents living in houses without running water or sanitary facilities at over 20,000.[72] In addition, it was claimed that "over 2,000 are domiciled in

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[70] Daily Star (St. John's), 2 April 1918.

[71] Proceedings fo the House of Assembly, 1918, 212.

[72] Daily News, 8 July 1918.

hovels utterly unfit for human habitation."[73] Housing conditions in St. John's had been a perennial concern since the nineteenth century as the city's sadly dilapidated slums attracted the attention of many.[74] By the later years of World War I, city workers, frustrated by the totality of their conditions stepped up their campaign for decent housing and an end to the "high rents charged for hovels in which not even cattle would be kept."[75] These complaints were similar to those voiced in Canadian urban centers, as demonstrated in testimony to the 1919 Royal Commission on Industrial Relations in Canada (the Mathers Commission). Dilapidated and expensive housing was a "near-universal complaint" during this period.[76] Each rental increase or eviction of a working-class family only served to strengthen labour's resolve to secure adequate housing in St. John's. After the war, this issue gained further momentum and resulted in the creation of the

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[73]Ibid.

[74]Melvin Baker, "The Government of St. John's, Newfoundland, 1880-1921," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1980; Baker, "Municipal Politics and Public Housing in St. John's, 1911-1921 in Workingmen's St. John's (St. John's: Cuff Publications, 1982), 29-43.

[75]Daily News, 4 July 1918.

[76]Gregory S. Kealey, '"1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt," Labour/Le Travail, 13 (Spring 1984), 41.

city's first municipal housing development in 1919.[77]

World War I was a period of working-class unrest throughout the Western world as labourers everywhere sensed that this was an historical epoch when conditions would favour their fight for a more equitable share of the wealth. In Newfoundland, industrial workers who had long been denied their fair portion of the wealth they laboured to produce viewed the war years as an opportunity to defend their interests in the "free market economy" of liberal capitalism. The wartime economy had increased labour's bargaining position due to the accelerated growth of war-related industries, but inflation threatened to strip away any gains which workers could expect to win. Workers could only hope to improve their lives by organizing and confronting capital from a position of collective strength. Until this happened labour would continue to be considered merely as a commodity, something to be purchased at the lowest possible price.[78] Economic privation played a major role in the development of a working-class consciousness. Historian Larry Peterson has stated that, "workers developed their consciousness ... primarily by means of economic action and organization rather than

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[77]Baker, "Public Housing," 29; working-class housing is described in greater detail in Chapter 6.

[78]Terry Copp, The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 148.

formal ideology."[79] James Cronin supports this interpretation when he writes that the effect of economic upheaval upon the lives of working people resulted in profound dissension which was "more important than simple war-weariness and the growth of an anti-war sentiment."[80] Cronin places great emphasis on unstable prices and a falling currency value as a catalyst to radical unrest.[81] In this sense, the war may be interpreted as exerting a dual effect: it compounded the vulnerable economic position of the working class, while at the same time offering an avenue of escape through militancy and collective action.

The extreme hardships suffered by working people due to wartime inflation have been amply documented in the Canadian literature. Michael Piva's study of real wages and their fluctuations in Toronto during the 1900-1921 period demonstrates just how harsh conditions became for the working poor. Using the federal Department of Labour's model of a budget for a family of five, Piva concludes that "the vast majority of Toronto's blue-collar population did not earn enough to support a family

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[79]Larry Peterson "The One Big Union in International Perspective: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism, 1900-1925," in Work, Community, and Power, ed. James E. Cronin and Carmen Sirianni (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 50-51.

[80]James E. Cronin, "Labour Insurgency," 126.

[81]Ibid., 133.

at an acceptable level."[82] During the war years conditions markedly deteriorated and the cost of the family budget between 1914 and 1920 "rose an incredible 96.4 per cent."[83] By 1920 the cost of the family budget was "more than three times greater than in 1900."[84] This budget was based on an extremely conservative calculation of what it would take to supply a family of five with the most basic necessities of life, namely, food, fuel, light, and rent. It did not include health care expenses, "luxuries," household furniture, union dues, or other incidental costs.[85] Terry Copp's study of the Montreal working class has shown similar examples of the devastating effect of

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[82]Michael J. Piva. The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto, 1900-1921 (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1979), 58; See also, Gorden Bertram and Michael Percy, "Real Wage Trends in Canada 1900-26," Canadian Journal of Economics, 12 (May 1979), 299-312.

[83]Piva, The Condition of the Working Class, 46. Piva continues: "With the revival of industrial activity during 1916 and 1917 was accompanied by the worst inflation recorded during the first decades of the century. Prices rose 14 per cent in 1916 and 36.2 per cent in 1917. The rate of inflation slowed somewhat during the last year of the war, but prices still rose another 7.6 per cent in 1918 and 6.5 per cent in 1919. The expected post-war depression did not immediately materialize, and prices rose yet another 18.3 per cent in 1920." While not refuting Piva's general conclusions, Edward Chambers has suggested that greater caution be applied to evaluations of working class living standards to ensure an accurate representation. See, Edward J. Chambers, "New Evidence on the Living Standards of Toronto Blue Collar Workers in the Pre-1914 Era," Histoire sociale-Social History, 18, 36 (November 1985), 285-314.

[84]Piva, Condition of the Working Class, 46.

[85]Ibid., 36.

wartime inflation upon the segment of society least able to bear further privation. Like Piva, Copp has found that during the war some wages increased, and there was a strong demand for labour to meet increased production in secondary manufacturing, but "an incredible inflationary spiral further depressed the standard of living."[86] In the end, conditions went from bad to worse for the working class. Copp attributes this state of affairs to a ruthless policy of capital accumulation. "The real problems facing Canadians were primarily the product of a free market economy in which the owners of capital possessed virtually unlimited powers."[87] An examination of testimony to the Mathers Commission provides a further indication of the suffering endured by workers during this period. Some of the major issues are summarized in a section of Greg Kealey's overview of the 1919 labour revolt:

> They complained continuously of high food prices, of blatant profiteering, and of bureaucratic ineptitude, as well as of inflationary rents and inadequate housing. These complaints united all workers in ways that the more limited workplace battles sometimes failed to. Moreover the political dynamite in this situation was the clear dichotomy between a government which refused "fair wages" and conscripted manpower, and a government which allowed blatant

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[86] Terry Copp, Anatomy of Poverty, 35.

[87] Ibid., 148.

> profiteering and refused to conscript wealth.[88]

The related issues of housing conditions, the high cost-of-living, declining real wages, war profiteering, and wartime conscription all served to unite Newfoundland's working-class, compelling it to act collectively to redress the manifest inequalities of its existence. This emerging movement built upon a heritage of labour activism which dated back many generations. This prior story of collective action and unionism must be presented to place the events of 1914 to 1920 in their appropriate context.

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[88]Gregory S. Kealey, "1919," 42; also of interest regarding the Mathers Commission testimony is, Sean T. Cadigan, "Working-Class Consciousness in Canada: 1919," unpublished Honours B.A. thesis, Memorial University, 1984.

Chapter Three

The Origins of the Newfoundland Labour Movement

Pre-confederation Newfoundlanders were "docile and cautious folk .... [for whom] The chance to earn wages was such a privilege that overtime was paid at half the normal rate, not at a premium."[1] This patronizing, regionally myopic appraisal is all too typical of the standard interpretations accorded the history of labour in Newfoundland. Despite a long and vibrant record of collective action and plebeian protest, which can be traced back at least to the early nineteenth-century, these simplistic and inaccurate stereotypes persist. Although recent scholarship has begun to uncover the story of the Island's working-class experience, still "we know little of the lives and achievements of labouring Newfoundlanders."[2] With the notable exception of William F. Coaker's Fishermen's Protective Union (FPU), which has received considerable analysis, especially as a third-party political entity, only a handful of labour studies exist. This historical void has only served to perpetuate the off-handed dismissals which have so often labeled

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[1]Desmond Morton and Terry Copp, Working People: An Illustrated History of Canadian Labour (Toronto: Deneau, 1980), 220.

[2]Bill Gillespie, "A History of the Newfoundland Federation of Labour, 1936-63," unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University, 1980, 1. (Henceforth cited as "History").

labour history in the Atlantic region as "backward" and "conservative." It has become imperative to study the history of the Newfoundland labour movement to break "the curiously combined mould of geographic determinism and 'great manism'" which has characterized most accounts.[3] For whether these "toilers" laboured upon land, or at sea, their story is worthy of historical scrutiny.

This chapter is divided into three sections, each dealing with one aspect of the Newfoundland labour movement's origins, and primarily focusing upon St. John's. Section I provides a brief background dealing with early examples of the Island's tradition of plebeian protest and how this may have influenced later union developments. In the urban context, nascent union organizations appeared early in the city, but these were characteristically transient and limited attempts at craft-based unions. Section II describes the efflorescence of the labour movement beginning in the 1880s and on into the next century.[4] This is a period characterized by its highly active union organization and multiple attempts

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[3]Gregory S. Kealey, Introd., A Class Act: An Illustrated History of the Labour Movement in Newfoundland and Labrador, by Bill Gillespie (St. John's: Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, 1986), 9.

[4]I have adopted the periodization developed by Greg Kealey (in part, influenced by the Rolf Hattenhauer manuscript) as described in The History and Structure of the Newfoundland Labour Movement," background report prepared for the Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment, St. John's, 1986.

to form a broadly-based trades and labour council. Also included will be an overview of the barriers facing unionists in terms of Newfoundland's outdated, ambiguous legal structures. Section III examines the continued growth of unions (both indigenous and international) during the first two decades of the twentieth-century. The tremendous success of the FPU in northeastern Newfoundland was to some measure matched by developments in St. John's. Some speculations as to why these movements failed to develop into a unified labour alliance will be offered. Finally, this section will attempt to place the St. John's labour experience into the broader context of working-class movements and strike patterns in Canada.

I

Newfoundlanders share an impressive history of collective action and plebeian protest going back at least to the first quarter of the nineteenth-century. In this period coastal fishermen brought "rough justice" to those merchants who transgressed the boundaries of accepted custom. The roots of this culture of resistance descend from the traditions of the Irish and West country English settlers who came to live and work on this North Atlantic Island. Historian Linda Little has examined numerous incidents of plebeian collective action during the 1830s

and 1840s.[5] Her work documents the earliest known example of working-class protest with an analysis of the 1832 Sealers' Strike led by an ad hoc organization known as "The Fishermen of Carbonear and Harbour Grace." On this occasion, one hundred armed men ransacked the schooner Perseverance to protest a plan of the towns' merchants to alter the contractual agreements governing work in the annual seal hunt.[6] Merchants were determined to offer fishermen credit notes instead of the usual cash payments for their labour. If carried out, this plan would have eliminated the only hard currency fishermen earned during the year, thus binding them even more rigidly to the exploitative "truck system" of credit. This rebellion centred upon the fishermen's determination to retain a level of autonomy over the domination of the fish merchants. Other protests in 1838 (over changes in "berth money" paid for places on sealing ships) and in 1843 (over similar issues) demonstrated the power behind collective protests designed to uphold the fishermen's right to "British Justice." By this they meant the assertion of a reciprocal arrangement whereby customary rights would be respected by fishermen and planter alike. It was understood that a merchant's failure to deal justly with the

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[5]Linda Little, "Plebeian Collective Action in Harbour Grace and Carbonear, Newfoundland, 1830-1840," unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University, 1984, 154-90.

[6]Ibid.

"masses" would elicit a response by "direct action."[7] This tradition of collective protest, continuing throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, became influential in the development of different forms of class conscious expression. Protests by fishermen were not limited to the rural parts of the Island as one turn-of-the-century dispute brought the strikers right to the capital city itself.

The massive St. John's Sealers' Strike of 1902 was a forceful example of how this tradition of class action could be displayed on the home ground of the Water Street merchants. In March of that year just prior to the departure of the sealing fleet, an estimated 3,000 men waged a successful, largely non-violent, demonstration which clearly proclaimed the rights of this class to fair treatment from both the fish merchants and their closely-allied political peers.[8] In some respect, this event linked earlier nineteenth-century protests to those of the modern era and provided urban labourers with a lasting example of the value of collective action.

Nevertheless St. John's workers had started their own traditions of labour activism early in the nineteenth

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[7]Ibid.

[8]Briton Cooper Busch, "The Newfoundland Sealers' Strike of 1902," Labour/Le Travail, 14 (1984), 73-102; James J. Fogarty, "The Seal Skinners' Union," in The Book of Newfoundland, vol.2, ed. J.R. Smallwood (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937), 100.

century with the formation of benevolent societies. One of the earliest moves to form a labour organization in St. John's was begun on 3 March 1827, when city tradesmen founded the Mechanic's Society.[9] With an executive body consisting of various craft and professional representatives, and a substantial entrance fee, the Society functioned as a mutual support system administering sickness insurance and a burial plan.[10] The Society prospered and by 1846 constructed its own meeting hall complete with library facilities.[11] Gradually, city trades began to assert their independent identities and they started to display their craft banners and badges during public ceremonies and parades. By the 1850s prominent crafts, such as the coopers, and tailors had formed distinct organizations. The commercial wealth of the colony centred on the fishery and upon its health rested the progress of the capital city. The city's limited range of trades and manufacturing industries were characterized by small-sized operations often employing a handful of craftsmen.[12] Although conditions were not

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[9]Gillespie, "History," 6.

[10]Ibid., 7. The Mechanic's Society also attracted representatives of the St. John's middle class and thus was not a independent labour organization.

[11]Ibid.

[12]John L. Joy, "The Growth and Development of Trades and Manufacturing in St. John's, 1870-1914," unpublished M.A. Thesis, Dept. of History, Memorial University, 1977,

conducive to union organization, some early attempts were made to draw workers together. City shipwrights formed an early association in 1851, while the sealskinners made a similar move three years later.[13] These early groups were joined by a growing number of craft unions struggling to establish their identities. While some of these initial attempts at collective association lacked longevity they were a harbinger of further developments that would soon surface.

II

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the St. John's local economy experienced a modest, but significant phase of expansion and diversification.[14] These changes in the economic health of the city had their parallel in union activity. An extensive list of city groups moved to form trade unions, some for the first time, while others tried to re-group after earlier unsuccessful attempts. Skilled labour led the way as new unions were formed from a number of crafts including sailmakers, tanners, blacksmiths, tinsmiths, moulders,

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[13]Gillespie, A Class Act, 19-20.

[14]Joy, "The Growth and Development of Trades," 1-20.

printers, tailors, coopers, masons, and shoemakers.[15] Although it has been suggested that some of these groups may have developed links with British, Canadian, or American unions no evidence has emerged to substantiate these claims. Instead these locally-based unions chose to retain their individual identities. This expansion in labour organization was not exclusively limited to craft unions as unskilled and semi-skilled workers, especially along the waterfront, began to work towards collective action, a process culminating in the formation of the Truckmen's Protective Union (1900), the Longshoremen's Protective union (1903), and the Firemen's Protective Union (1904). This latter group included marine firemen and stokers as well as stationary firemen working in St. John's. The strike record for the years between 1890-1899 shows that at least 49 work stoppages occurred and these figures also attest to an upsurge in working-class organization.[16] This era is also notable for the determined efforts amongst labour groups to broaden their collective influence with the formation of trades and labour councils. These early councils commonly shared in

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[15]Rolf Hattenhauer, "A History of the Labour Movement in Newfoundland," unpublished manuscript, Memorial University, 1983, 256-77. (Henceforth cited as "History of Newfoundland Labour").

[16]Jessie Chisholm, "'Hang Her Down': Strikes in St. John's, 1890-1914," unpublished research paper, Memorial University, 1987, 6.

an ambitious mandate to introduce progressive measures designed to further the interests of labour.

The Workingmen's Union of Newfoundland represented the first such attempt. At its formative meeting, held at the Fishermen's Hall on 23 February 1893, a group of city workers, initially said to number 300, drew up a constitution which outlined the group's goals. These included: the desire to strive for "fair and equitable renumeration" for labour, encouraging the development of new trades and industries in the colony, to only support political candidates whose aims were to further the interests of labour, and to work to remove legal statutes which "in any way obstruct or impede" the goals of labour.[17] Although the Workingmen's Union "foreswore the use of the strike in any but the most desperate circumstance," the existence of such an organization testified to an underlying mood of unrest amongst St. John's craftsmen marking a new era in the development of a city-wide labour movement. Among unionists there was a realization that only through active political involvement would the interests of the working class be adequately served. The union experienced rapid growth in its membership during its early stages (signing up 800 members by April 1893), but its existence proved short-lived. The Union's demise is usually attributed to a lack of experienced leadership and to a serious downturn

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[17]Gillespie, "History," 11.

in the national economy following the colony's 1894 bank crash. Yet the concept of a co-ordinating body for St. John's labour groups retained its appeal and once again city workers, led by a rejuvenated Mechanic's Society under their new president Thomas M. White, attempted to form a trades and labour council.

White, elected to his post in 1895, was by trade a wheelwright, although he worked as an assistant accountant at Reid Newfoundland Company between 1904 and 1914.[18] Under his direction, the Mechanic's Society appealed to St. John's tradesmen to come together and form a united front protecting the cause of labour. As before, the response to this proposal was overwhelming and by early 1897 most city unions had signed on with the Society.[19] Riding a crest of labour activism, city unions displayed their solidarity in a massive Labour Day parade held in July of that year. Over 1,000 marchers, representing a wide range of crafts marched through downtown St. John's holding aloft banners proclaiming slogans such as, "Fair Play for Honest Labour."[20] During the next several years the Mechanic's Society succeeded in persuading the

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[18]For a biographical sketch of White see, Robert H. Cuff, "Thomas M. White," Newfoundland Quarterly, 82 (3) Winter 1987, 32-33. White later served as NIWA President, 1919-1920.

[19]Gillespie, "History," 14.

[20]Gillespie, A Class Act, 22-24.

government to enact some measures of progressive legislation. Import tariffs on manufactured goods were raised to protect local industries while taxes were reduced on some imported raw materials.[21] The Society also pushed for the passage of one of the colony's few factory-related laws, the 1899 Boiler Inspection Act.[22] But this success proved limited as once again the disparate mix of St. John's labour groups failed to remain a cohesive force. Gradually the movement lost its impetus as calls for additional social legislation fell off and the group's activities were reduced to modest annual outings. There were also questions as to the appeal of a movement focusing upon craft unions to the exclusion of the city's sizable population of unskilled labour.

The concept of a city trades and labour council was resurrected in 1905 at the behest of one of St. John's most militant labour groups, the International Association of Machinists, "Terra Nova" Lodge 87 (founded in 1904).[23] The machinists issued a call to established groups, such as the St. John's Journeymen Coopers' Union, "to meet and discuss the formation of a Trades and Labour Council ...

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Statutes of Newfoundland, 1899, 62-63 Vict., Ch. 14, "The Boiler Inspection Act."

[23] International Association of Machinists, Machinist's Monthly Journal, September, 1904.

for the benefit of trade generally."[24] The following week several local machinists outlined the purpose of such a council in greater detail. Such a council would be able to secure "many advantages ... by combination that would be impossible while each Union was standing alone."[25] Specifically, this meant mutual aid in time of grievances and strikes. Further goals were to form a retail co-operative "by which the members of the affiliation would get the necessities of life cheaper than at present ... to start a paper in the interest of the workingmen ... not under the control of the Capitalist," and to "return a sufficient number of representatives to the Legislature and Municipal Council (as a Labour Party) to see that the workingmen's interests were protected."[26] The concept appealed to the coopers' union and they voted unanimously to join the labour council.[27] Tentative progress was made with the council until spring 1905, when an acrimonious strike which pitted city machinists and moulders against several major employers re-directed the energies of

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[24]Minute Books of the St. John's Journeymen Coopers' Union, "Special Monthly Meeting," 6 April 1905. Manuscript located in the Maritime History Archives, Memorial University.

[25]Coopers' Minutes, 12 April 1905.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid., 6 April 1905; Coopers' Union president, George Power served as the TLC's vice-president during this period.

unionists. This event foreshadowed the demise of IAM Lodge 87, and with this loss went immediate plans for the Trades and Labour Council.[28] Following the failure of the machinists to organize a collective council, a fourth attempt was launched in 1907. Led by Michael P. Gibbs, a lawyer and then Mayor of St. John's, this movement's stated goal was "to promote the welfare of the workman and to adjust differences whenever they arise between employers and employed."[29] This plan, however, aroused the suspicions of many unions and it did not attract the widespread support garnered by earlier councils.[30]

The lack of a unified labour front was not the only barrier which faced those attempting to further labour and working-class issues. The legal status of unions was ambiguous at best, while basic measures of progressive social legislation lagged behind most Western nations. With the granting of responsible government in 1855, Newfoundland was empowered to draft its own legislation. The first such law specifically concerning labour was the

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[28]Chisholm, "Hang Her Down," 31; Gillespie, "History," 17-18.

[29]Evening Telegram (St. John's), 22 August 1907. (Cited in Gillespie "History," 18).

[30]Gibbs had close connections with Prime Minister Edward P. Morris' unpopular People's Party and this may explain the 1907 TLC's failure. For further details see, Melvin Baker, "Michael P. Gibbs," Newfoundland Quarterly 81 (4) Spring 1986, 48.

passage of the Master and Servants Act in 1858.[31] This Act stipulated the respective responsibilities of employers and their contracted employees. This legislation provided limited protection for labourers, in that it forced employers to submit all outstanding wages due an employee within three days, and in extreme circumstances employers could face imprisonment. Yet the thrust of the Act was decidedly anti-labour. Workers considered to have breached contract could be summarily imprisoned, or were liable to be deducted an amount equal to twice the agreed daily wage for each day absent from the job.[32] The Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act (1875) effectively placed all labour organizations in a state of legal ambiguity as they were liable to be classed as illegal combinations subject to severe penalties if the courts chose to apply a broad interpretation of the law.[33] Other legislation which should have offered some form of legal protection to labourers was in practice ineffectual. The Employers Liability Act (1887) did make employers liable for job-related injuries, but compensation could only be obtained through a civil suit in a court of law. The cost of such an action was simply beyond the means of most

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[31] Statutes of Newfoundland, 1858, 21 Vict., Ch. 9, "The Master and Servants Act."

[32] Ibid.

[33] Chisholm, "Hang Her Down," 15-16.

workers as the onus was placed upon the litigant to prove criminal negligence. Employers could have cases dismissed if they could produce evidence demonstrating the worker in question was in any way responsible for the accident or if it was caused by fellow workers.[34] Some corporations found even this weak legislation threatening and sought ways of further limiting its reach. A standard clause in every employee's contract with the Reid Newfoundland Railway forced workers to give up any legal right to workmen's compensation.[35] In 1902, the Act was amended to prevent such contractual clauses in the future.[36] The Workmen's Compensation Act (1908) closely followed a similar British Act passed two years earlier.[37] The Act stipulated that compensation in the event of a worker's death was to be a sum equal to that individual's earnings for the last 3 years or a minimum of $750, to a maximum of $1500. Compensation for job-related injuries entitled

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[34] Statutes of Newfoundland, 1887, 50 Vict., Ch. 13, "The Employers' Liability Act."

[35] Walter Sparks Labour Collection (COLL.49) Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University.

[36] Statutes of Newfoundland, 1902, 2 Ed. VII, Ch. 22, "The Employers' Liability Act Amendment."

[37] Statutes of Newfoundland, 1908, 8 Ed. VII, Ch. 5, "Workmen's Compensation Act." The Act's maximum compensation levels were still unchanged when T.K. Liddell examined Newfoundland's labour legislation in the late 1930s. See, Thomas K. Liddell, Industrial Survey of Newfoundland (St. John's: Robinson and Company, 1940). (Henceforth cited as Liddell Report).

workers to receive weekly payments based upon 50 per cent of the average weekly earnings over the previous 12 months. This compensation was not to exceed $5 per week. Despite this updated legislation, the burden of proof still lay upon the worker, and not the employer. Other legislation of note included, the Mechanics' Lien Act (1890) which provided for the placement of a lien on an employer's property in lieu of backwages, several pieces of legislation dealing with the compensation of fishermen lost at sea, and governing employment in the mining industry.[38] Gradually more progressive legislation was placed before the House of Assembly. The influence of labour in elections was bolstered by the Secret Ballot Act (1887) and the extension of the franchise to all males over 21 years in 1890. Women were excluded from voting until 1925 when they secured this right at the municipal level only. With the passage of the Trade Union Act (1910), modeled on British laws introduced in the 1870s, Newfoundland could finally resolve some of the uncertainty surrounding the legal status of its unions.[39]

Still many legal protections successfully introduced in Britain and other Western countries were absent in

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[38] Statutes of Newfoundland, 1888, 51 Vict., Ch. 11, "An Act to Compensate Families of Fishermen Lost at the Bank Fishery."

[39] Statutes of Newfoundland, 1910, 17 Ed. VII, Ch. 6, "The Trade Union Act."

Newfoundland. In St. John's workplace conditions were often harsh, with long hours, poor lighting and ventilation, and no enforceable health and safety standards. This reflected the absence of factory acts or any legislation directly concerned with working conditions.[40] With the exception of the Mines (Regulation) Act of 1906, which made it unlawful to employ boys under the age of eighteen in underground mining operations, there were no laws concerned with child labour or compulsory education in either urban or rural settings.[41] Laws dealing with working hours for adults in factories or retail establishments remained off the books.[42] Critical to this lack of progressive legislation was the absence of a ministry or department of labour during the pre-Confederation era.

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[40] In comparison, several Canadian provincial governments had passed factory acts much earlier. See, Canada Investigates Industrialism: The Royal Commission on the Relations of Labour and Capital, ed., introd. Gregory S. Kealey. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 14-15 and passim; Bryan D. Palmer, Working Class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980 (Toronto: Butterworth, 1983), 145-46.

[41] Statutes of Newfoundland, 1906, 62-63 Vict., Ch. 14, "Mines (Regulation) Act"; For child labour laws, see Liddell Report, 101-31.

[42] Liddell Report, 132. Liddell reports that "In St. John's, where short-time in the factories is so often in operation, the hours worked may vary from as high as seventy to seventy-five per week to twenty-seven hours per week, and even less." Before the passage of "The Shop Closing Hours Act, St. John's (1936)," hours were determined by individual employers. As Liddell notes, "It is not so long ago since the hours in these establishments were from 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m."

This issue was of perennial concern to St. John's labour groups throughout this period. Such a department was repeatedly promised by the governments of the day but a ministry was not actively functioning until after Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada.[43] Because of this contracts were not legally binding and what concessions labour groups managed to wrest from local businessmen could be arbitrarily withdrawn when economic conditions altered. Examples abound of major strikes fought over issues such as working-conditions, wages, and union recognition which resulted in partial or complete victories for labour groups, only to be unilaterally reversed by the same employers who signed these contracts.[44] Understandably, the desire for progressive legislation which clearly established labour's place in Newfoundland society was a major focal point during the pre-war years.

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[43] Statutes of Newfoundland, 1933, 23-24 Geo. V, Ch. 47, "The Department of Labour Act." The Act provided for a minister of Labour, to be appointed by the Governor-in-Council, who would maintain a record of labour statistics, investigate and mediate in labour disputes. A Department of Labour was established in 1933, but with the suspension of Responsible Government the following year, the Department closed. In 1942, a Labour Relations Office was created as a division of the Department of Public Utilities, but an effective Department was not functioning until 1949.

[44] Ian D. Sparkes, "Pre-Confederation Labour Legislation in Newfoundland," unpublished Honours dissertation, Dept. of Business Administration, 1969. 26-27; Ernest B. Akyeampong, "Labour Laws and the Development of the Labour Movement in Newfoundland, 1900-1960," unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University, 1967.

III

In the years leading to the outbreak of World War I, union organization continued to tally a string of successful ventures. "Most impressive in St. John's was the extension of unionism to the unskilled and semi-skilled."[45] As a commercial seaport, much of St. John's labour force was employed in occupations that were in some way connected to the waterfront area. These workers were active in many of the city's labour confrontations. Jessie Chisholm has found that for the 1890-1914 period, 68 per cent of the strikes in St. John's were initiated by unskilled or semi-skilled workers, and that the majority (42 per cent) involved waterfront occupations.[46] These strikes appear to have been largely successful in securing victories in disputes over wages and working conditions. Typically work stoppages were carefully timed to coincide with shipping schedules. As the loading and unloading of steamers were critical periods on the waterfront, longshore workers targeted specific ships with strikes of short duration in a move to win concessions from their employers.[47] These brief, well-disciplined actions were extremely difficult to counteract and merchants usually

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[45]Chisholm, "Hang Her Down," 6.

[46]Ibid., 9.

[47]Liddell Report, 32.

found themselves relenting in a wide range of workplace issues. The use of casual labourers, often baymen from outside St. John's, could break a strike, but this threat was effectively met when waterfront workers formed their own unions, such as the LSPU.[48] The LSPU honoured a strict code respecting the jurisdictions of other city unions. Members caught strikebreaking or undervaluing their services faced heavy fines and expulsion from the union.[49] The LSPU's influence often proved decisive in persuading non-union casuals from participating in labour disputes or undercutting union wage schedules.[50]

In comparison to the St. John's dockside, the city's skilled tradesmen were both less visible and less successful in their record of strike activity. Time and again craft unions became mired in lengthy protests which often extended union resources to the limit of their endurance. Employers had no hesitation in blacklisting their workers and offering these jobs to unemployed city craftsmen willing to accept non-union terms. The importation of new hands, either from outside St. John's or the colony, was common practice. Technology designed to replace craft skills was introduced in several trades, including those

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[48]For further details on the LSPU, see Chapter 1.

[49]Minutes of the Longshoremen's Protective Union (St. John's), 3 April 1917. Located at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University.

[50]Liddell Report, 26, 36-38.

of the coopers and sealskinners.[51] Despite these challenges a number of craft unions established and defended reputations placing them in the forefront of Newfoundland's labour movement. Included in this group were the coopers, carpenters, printers, shoemakers, tinsmiths, and especially those in the metal trades: the boilermakers, moulders and machinists. Many of these unions were of local origin and were often unwilling to surrender their sovereignty to foreign organizations.[52] Gradually international unions assumed greater visibility in the pre-war period. The first recorded international affiliation involved the Journeymen Tailors' Union of America in 1904, the same year local machinists joined the International Association of Machinists.[53] St. John's printers became

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[51] John Joy, "The Cooperage Trade in St. John's, Newfoundland, 1870-1914," unpublished paper, Newfoundland Historical Society, 28 February 1985, 4-6. A mechanical sealskinning machine was introduced in St. John's in the early twentieth century.

[52] Several references exist of correspondence between St. John's coopers and the International Coopers' Union. On 24 December 1896, local coopers apparently decided to affiliate with the international, but the outcome of this move remains unclear. Three years later, several additional references indicate that these negotiations were not resolved. Details of a 1904 cooper's strike in St. John's clearly indicate the local union had no international affiliation. In 1911, further correspondence suggests that St. John's coopers were favourable to joining the international union. See the following references, Evening Herald (St. John's), 24 December 1896, 12 September, 9 October 1899; the Lance, 5 August 1911.

[53] References located in The Tailor, the journal of the Journeymen Tailors' Union of America, indicate that union representative Hugh Robinson organized a St. John's

Local 703 of the International Typographical Union in 1912.[54] Other unions with international affiliations were the International Boot and Shoe Workers' Union (Local 482), and the carpenters and retail sales clerks.[55] Outside St. John's, the papermill operations at Grand Falls (constructed in 1907) attracted the International Brotherhood of Papermakers, and the International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite and Paper Mill Workers.[56] It was not until after World War I that the railway unions would establish formal connections in Newfoundland.[57] During

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local in 1904, and by August of that year the JTUofA had sent a union charter to the city. See, The Tailor, vol. 14 July 1904, 17; August 1904, 14. A further reference in The Tailor, vol. 15 January 1905, 19, claimed that the JTUofA is the first international to "obtain a foothold" in Newfoundland. I am indebted to Jessie Chrsholm for contributing these citations, and those on the coopers. Rolf Hattenhauer suggested that Newfoundland stonemasons may have held some connections to a British union as early as the 1830s, but this has never been substantiated. See, Hattenhauer, "History of Newfoundland Labour," 213-14.

[54]Minutes of the International Typographer's Union (Local 703), October 1912, Hattenhauer Labour Collection (Coll.79) Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University. See also, The Typographical Journal, 59 (6) December 1921, 728-29, for further details on the St. John's local.

[55]For details on Local 482, see, International Boot and Shoe Workers' Union, The Shoe Workers' Journal, 20 (6) June 1919, 25.

[56]Gillespie, "History of the NFL," 29.

[57]Liddell Report, 42-45. The Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (BRT) established a Newfoundland local in 1919; the Order of Railway Telegraphers (ORT) set up its Division 85, 15 September 1920; the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers came to Newfoundland in 1920; as did Lodge 163 of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees

the same period in which the pulp and paper operation at Grand Falls was attracting the attentions of international unions, another group was in the process of forming their own union movement. This new union sought to organize the Island's largest labour force into one cohesive unit and thereby mould a disparate and fragmented group into a social and political force which could command the respect of Newfoundland's fish merchants and their political allies. This organization was the Fishermen's Protective Union (FPU).

Founded on 2 November 1908, within ten years the Union could claim a membership of 20,000 fishermen and loggers, 13 elected members of the House of Assembly under its political wing the Union party, a co-operative system of stores under the Union Trading Company with 40 branch outlets strung across the Island and a business exceeding $3 million yearly.[58] From its headquarters in the newly-constructed town of Port Union, the FPU oversaw a diverse range of activities including its own electric company and shipbuilding operations. Reports of these endeavours were widely disseminated to members by the Union's daily and weekly newspaper, the Fishermen's Advocate. Ironically the leader of this spectacularly successful movement was

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[58]Sir William F. Coaker, Twenty Years of the Fishermen's Protective Union of Newfoundland (1930; rpt. St. John's: Creative Publishing, 1984).

not a fisherman, nor was he from an outport community.

The man who became known as the "Messiah of the North" was born William Ford Coaker in St. John's in 1871.[59] Coaker was determined to break the chronic cycle of exploitation that locked fishermen in a perpetual state of debt to the Water Street merchants. The forces aligned in opposition to the FPU not only included the businessmen and politicians he sought to replace, but the formidable influence of the Roman Catholic Church led by the Archbishop of St. John's, Michael F. Howley. It was Howley who issued the notorious circular letter condemning secret societies on 31 March 1909.[60] This proclamation roundly damned the FPU as "morally wrong and sinful" for its secret behaviour and political aspirations. Howley went further and in so doing revealed his true concerns,

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[59]William Ford Coaker was educated in St. John's at the General Protestant Academy, and later informally at Bishop Feild College. After a variety of jobs, including work as a Water Street clerk, subsistence farming and fishing, he turned to politics. Elected to the House of Assembly in 1913 as the MHA for Bonavista he served as Minister without Portfolio in the National coalition government between July 1917 and May 1919. Coaker was Minister of Marine and Fisheries in the Squires' government (November 1919-July 1923), and later Minister without Portfolio between July 1923-May 1924. Knighted in 1923, Coaker resigned as president of the FPU in 1926. He died at Port Union in 1938.

[60]Archbishop M.F. Howley, "Circular Letter on Secret Societies," 31 March 1909. For further details on this, see Ian McDonald, "Coaker the Reformer - A Brief Biographical Introduction," in The Book of Newfoundland Vol. 6, ed. J.R. Smallwood (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1975).

namely:

> [The FPU] is calculated to cause great confusion, and an upheaval of our social fabric; to set class against class; the fishermen against the merchant; the labourer against the employer, the outport man against the St. John's man, all of which are fraught with mischief to our peace and prosperity.[61]

Such an edict was not to be ignored in the capital city where there was a large concentration of working-class Catholics. In his last caveat (dealing with tensions between baymen and city workers) Howley had struck upon something which proved to be accurate. For the FPU's presence in St. John's, and on the Avalon Peninsula, would be minimal. Instead the Union's power base was situated on the Island's north-east coast in predominantly Protestant districts.[62]

In time, the FPU's influence was decisive in introducing many long overdue reforms to Newfoundland's fishing industry. In addition to providing fishermen with an alternative to the traditional merchant businesses, the Union fought for the abolition of the infamous "tal qual" system of fish grading, the regulation and rationalization

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[61]Howley, "Circular Letter on Secret Societies."

[62]Robert J. Brym and Barbara Neis, "Regional Factors in the Formation of the Fishermen's Protective Union of Newfoundland," in Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada, ed. R.J. Brym and R.J. Sacouman (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1979), 204, 212. Brym and Neis note that Protestant churches also opposed the FPU.

of the fishing industry and an end to the "truck system" of merchant-controlled credit.[63] Yet the Union's ambitions for the future extended well beyond industry-related reforms by venturing into an aggressive political manifesto as proclaimed in the 1912 "Bonavista Platform." This detailed document with its 31 point program of social reform covering matters from elected school boards to an old age pension clearly indicated that Coaker and his followers sought to introduce significant changes in the way many Newfoundlanders conducted their lives.[64] But the process of change also involved a bitter struggle against the reactionary forces of Newfoundland's political and social elite, both in the House of Assembly and in the austere upper chamber, the Legislative Council.[65] Between the years 1913 and 1919, when the House of Assembly sat a full six years, Coaker's Union Party was potentially in a position to dictate its terms to the Liberal, and later National coalition, governments. Yet, as historian S.J.R. Noel noted, before the war had ended "one of the casual-

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[63] Ibid.; With the "tal qual" system fishermen brought their catches to a representative of a fish merchant to be "culled," or assessed as to their quality and grade, upon which a price was determined. Obviously, such a method could be biased in favour of the merchants.

[64] For an analysis of the Bonavista Platform, see, John Feltham, "The Development of the F.P.U. in Newfoundland, 1908-1923," unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University, 1959.

[65] S.J.R. Noel, Politics in Newfoundland (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 95-115.

ties was undoubtedly the Fishermen's Protective Union."[66] The major issue which alienated William Coaker from his supporters was his decision to support the conscription of men for overseas service, a move which placed him in direct conflict with rank-and-file Unionists.[67]

Before Coaker's fall from grace his influence on the St. John's labour scene had important ramifications. As noted earlier, the FPU faced the concerted opposition of the powerful merchant class and ecclesiastical authorities in St. John's, but in his own published opinions Coaker continually railed against the capital city and its inhabitants. For example, Coaker was characteristically outspoken in his strident denunciation of import tariffs as they increased the cost-of-living of fishermen and loggers. Yet these same tariffs were the basis of many St. John's-based import-substitution industries which employed a substantial percentage of the local work force. In her thesis on the FPU, Barbara Neis has suggested that differences in the backgrounds of outport fishermen and urban workers contributed to the limited appeal of the Union in St. John's.[68] Certainly organized labour in the

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[66] Ibid., 116.

[67] Ibid., 125-26.

[68] Barbara Neis, "A Sociological Analysis of the Factors Responsible for the Regional Distribution of the Fishermen's Protective Union of Newfoundland," unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University, 1980, 66-67. See also, Neis, "Competitive Merchants and Class Struggle in

city was often placed in conflict with outport men who journeyed into St. John's searching for work in times of economic hardship. Established unions, such as the coopers, were continually troubled by outport cooperages which employed non-union labour to produce low quality barrels and casks which undersold union label products.[69] During the latter stages of the war, when Coaker's appeal was waning, there is some evidence to suggest disgruntled outport labourers became interested in the St. John's-based Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association when this organization sought to expand its support across the Island.[70] What promise this development may have held for a new alliance between urban and rural labourers was cut short with the onslaught of the economic collapse soon after World War I.

Newfoundland," Studies in Political Economy, 5 (Spring 1981), 127-43. Historian Ian McDonald suggested that much of the animosity between St. John's workers and FPU was due to Coaker's threats to undermine the city's economy and in the process ruin "the merchants, manufacturers, and the Reid enterprises with whom they [the workers] identified their interests." But evidence does not support this contention. See, Ian D.H. McDonald, "W.F. Coaker and the Fishermen's Protective Union in Newfoundland Politics, 1908-1925," ed. J.K. Hiller, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University, (forthcoming).

[69]Joy, "The Growth and Development of Trades," 123-27.

[70]In late-1917 and 1918, numerous inquiries were received from outport communities along the north-east coast, the FPU's stronghold. See, Peter McInnis, "Newfoundland Labour and World War I," unpublished research paper, Memorial University, 1985, 18-19.

In St. John's, the dynamic growth of a local labour movement is represented in the city's record of strikes and lockouts. These figures suggest that this urban centre was anything but the quiescent and fragmented stereotype presented in most Newfoundland historiography.[71] Historian Jessie Chisholm has found that between the years of 1890 and 1914 there were at least 181 strikes in St. John's, and that the largest proportion of these (124) occurred between 1901 and 1914.[72] These data when compared with strike statistics for similar Canadian cities suggest that this type of activity in St. John's was "relatively high," considering the small size of the city's labour force.[73] Strike data given for Canadian centres cite the following frequency in this period: Saint John - 144; Halifax - 56; Sydney - 26.[74] Chisholm notes that Newfoundland's strike activity reached its peak in the years 1902-1904, and 1907, when the economy was in a state of expansion.[75] Employment opportunities through-

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[71]For example, Hattenhauer, "History of Newfoundland Labour." Hattenhauer's unpublished manuscript has been widely influential in shaping scholarly interpretations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century St. John's labour experience. See, for example, Barbara Neis, "A Sociological Analysis;" and Gillespie, "History."

[72]Chisholm, "Hang Her Down," 7.

[73]Ibid., 8.

[74]Ian McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes, 1901-1914," Acadiensis, 13, 1 (Autumn 1983), 11-15.

[75]Chisholm, "Hang Her Down," 8.

out the Atlantic region served to draw Newfoundlanders off the Island to permanent or temporary job opportunities in the Maritimes and "Boston States" of New England.[76] Historian Peter Neary has noted that "between 1881 and 1931 the Newfoundland-born population of Canada rose from 4,596 to 26,410."[77] Prior to Confederation many Newfoundlanders journeyed to Canada to obtain temporary work and thus "sojourning" was an important phenomenon in the colony's migration history.[78] One result of this exposure to mainland employment was expressed in terms of a comparison of wages and working conditions abroad to those at home. Usually the contrast between mainland and Newfoundland jobs left workers bitterly complaining of their local opportunities and left them determined to correct these conditions.

Situating the St. John's labour movement in the ongoing debate as to whether skilled craftsmen or unskilled labourers assumed leading roles in working-class protests presents evidence which suggests both similari-

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[76] In a speech before the House of Assembly, Michael P. Gibbs described how many working class Newfoundlanders were enjoying an improved standard-of-living in the United States. See, Proceedings of the Legislative Council, 23, 1 (1914), 139.

[77] Peter Neary, "Canada and the Newfoundland Labour Market, 1939-49," Canadian Historical Review, 62 (4) December 1981, 471.

[78] Ibid., Many of these workers travelled to Cape Breton's steel mills.

ties and differences from the North American historiography. Historian David Montgomery has been a prominent participant in this debate arguing that skilled craftsmen (especially metalworkers) played an important role in articulating the larger working-class critique of monopoly capitalism.[79] In terms of the Canadian experience, the debate was furthered by Bryan Palmer's and Craig Heron's interpretation of pre-war strike activity in Southern Ontario cities. Palmer and Heron suggested that skilled workers were in the vanguard of labour's resistance to new trends in capitalist development and that unskilled workers played a relatively minor role as illustrated in the available strike data.[80] An alternate interpretation of strikes centred in the Maritimes region presented by Ian McKay draws a contrasting conclusion by suggesting unskilled labour was highly active in strike activity before World War I.[81] McKay supports this view in his comments on the interaction between craft unions and unskilled labour by stating that skilled workers waged

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[79]David Montgomery, Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), 91-112.

[80]Craig Heron and Bryan Palmer, "Through the Prism of the strike: Industrial Conflict in Southern Ontario, 1901-1914," Canadian Historical Review, 58, December 1977, 423-58.

[81]Ian McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes, 1901-1914," Acadiensis, 13, 1 (Autumn 1983), 3-46.

what were largely defensive battles against capitalist incursions and were reluctant to cooperate with groups outside their craft base.[82] McKay's characterization of Halifax craft unions as an elite, conservative group aloof from the large body of unskilled waterfront labourers has many similarities to the situation in St. John's. Yet, the undeniable presence of unskilled workers in the Newfoundland strike record attests to a commercial seaport somewhat at variance with the situation to be found in the Maritimes. In St. John's, the prominence in strike statistics of either skilled or unskilled labour appears to have fluctuated markedly over this period following economic cycles of expansion and contraction. The pre-war statistics would support much of what McKay contends, while in the latter war years the influence of skilled workers, notably in the metal trades, suggests that craftsmen did serve an important function in efforts to secure fair wages and working conditions. Evidence for St. John's highlights the predominance of "workers'

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[82] Ian McKay, "Class Struggles and Merchant Capital: Craftsmen and Labourers on the Halifax Waterfront, 1850-1900," in The Character of Class Struggle: Essays in Canadian Working-Class History, 1850-1985, ed. Bryan D. Palmer (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 17-36; Heron's analysis of Hamilton metal trades supports this division: "There was no evidence of a transformation of their consciousness towards a broader solidarity with the less skilled." See, Craig Heron, "The Crisis of the Craftsman: Hamilton's Metal Workers in the Early Twentieth-Century," Labour/Le Travailleur, 6 (Autumn 1980), 7-48.

control" related strikes, both before and during World War I.[83] In times of uncontrolled inflation wage issues gained notoriety, but they were most often explicitly combined with shop-floor matters as well. Just where the city's labour experience comes down in this historiographic debate on skilled/unskilled workers awaits further empirical research, for at this point St. John's appears to reflect an amalgam of the two sides to the issue representing an economy with an enduring form of merchant capital, and increasingly elements of monopoly capitalism. As Palmer notes, "Specific regional economics, then, gave rise to quite distinct types of class relations."[84]

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[83]Chisholm, "Hang Her Down," 12; Workers' control strikes refer to issues such as union recognition, apprenticeship control, worker resistence to new job systems, and related matters.

[84]Bryan D. Palmer, Introduction, The Character of Class Struggle, 10-11.

Chapter Four

The First Year: The Emergence of the NIWA, 1917-1918

It was spring 1917, and the pervading mood amongst St. John's workers was one of frustration and anger. While the supercharged wartime economy tallied an impressive record of statistical growth, wage-earners found their pay packets increasingly stretched to provide for life's basic necessities. Far from improving, conditions were demonstrably worse. An unprecedented surge in the cost-of-living threatened to break the tenuous grip workers held on self-sufficiency. To confront this crisis, a group of metal workers from the railway and marine shops of the Reid Newfoundland Company met to discuss the formation of a new labour movement. On the evening of 25 April, the details were settled and the prototype of the future Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association (NIWA) came into existence.[1] Originally known as the Newfoundland Iron Workers' Association this organization from its inception adopted an avowedly

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[1]George H. Tucker, "The Old NIWA," in The Book of Newfoundland, vol. I, ed. J.R. Smallwood (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937), 279-81; Tension between railway shop employers and Reid management had been on the rise since the outbreak of the war in August 1914. At that time Reid Newfoundland had cut back its shop hours from 60 to 36 per week, only to gradually reinstate regular hours in the following months. See, interview with Thomas C. Noel by Rolf Hattenhauer, 26 May 1967, Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archives (MUNFLA), tape C-7232. Noel was a charter member of the NIWA.

industrial unionist stance. It sought to cut across the boundaries of craft and levels of skill to forge a unified body which could successfully confront the notoriously anti-union management of the Reid company. The response to this call to action was immediate and overwhelming. As the union's membership swelled far beyond the ranks of Reid employees a change in name was adopted to better reflect its new constituency.

The NIWA arose from the pressing need for working people to confront the economic and political realities of their class in a manner intended to redress the subservient and exploitative conditions to which they were subjected. The Association figures prominently in the events which helped shape the labour-capital relationship during the World War I years. As the Canadian and international record will testify, these years were critically important to the development of modern working-class organizations, while maintaining a direct link to the struggles of earlier eras. This chapter will provide a description and analysis of the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association in terms of its structure, membership, and activities. An examination of several strikes involving Association members will also provide some indications as to how this organization functioned.

The prominence of Reid Newfoundland workers in the ranks of the NIWA is partially attributable to the large

number of craftsmen who found work in a variety of the company's divisions. As the island's largest single employer, the Reid enterprises collected an assembly of labour expertise which was unmatched by any other business.[2] These operations brought together a wide assortment of skilled workers, ranging from boilermakers and moulders to electricians and shipwrights. In this concentrated environment workers could interact and discuss issues of mutual importance to their jobs. The most outspoken of this group of skilled workers were those who earned their livelihood in the metal trades. The list of names usually given as forming the nucleus of the IWA confirms the dominance of moulders, boilermakers, and machinists. It is hardly surprising to find machinists in the forefront of such an organization. With their well-earned reputation for union activism and aggressive defence of the right to workers' control of the shop floor, machinists were amongst the most vociferous of the industrial crafts.[3]

Newfoundland machinists had organized under the

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[2]John Joy, "The Growth and Development of Trades and Manufacturing in St. John's, 1870-1914" (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977), 149.

[3]On the militancy of the machinists, see David Montgomery, Workers' Control in Ameria (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 48-90; Cecelia F. Bucki, "Dilution and Craft Tradition," Social Science History, 4 (1) February 1980, 105-24; James E. Cronin, "Labor Insurgency and Class Formation," Social Science History, 4 (1) February 1980, 135-37.

banner of the International Association of Machinists as "Terra Nova" Lodge 87 in August 1904.[4] During this brief affiliation, lasting less than two years, the machinists waged one of the longest and most bitter of pre-war strikes in Newfoundland's history. The dispute originated in February 1905 when management at the Angel Engineering and Supply Company, one of the colony's largest heavy metal firms, refused to accede to a new wage schedule submitted by the machinists.[5] Finally on 16 April, Angel locked out their machinists when they refused to break a union rule and work overtime hours when qualified machinists in the city lacked employment. The strike quickly erupted into a city-wide campaign to "uphold union principles" and local iron moulders from the Terra Nova Works and Consolidated Foundry walked out in sympathy.[6] By June the large labour force employed at the Reid Newfoundland Company dry dock and railway shops joined in the protest. City employers attempting to import craftsmen from Britain were foiled when St. John's unionists persuaded these recruits to abandon their plans and travel instead to Montreal. While the Catholic church denounced

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[4]Machinist's Monthly Journal, (August 1904), 75.

[5]Jessie Chisholm, "'Hang Her Down': Strikes in St. John's, 1890-1914," unpublished paper, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1987, 31.

[6]Ibid., for further details of St. John's metal industries see, A.B. Perlin, The Story of Newfoundland (St. John's: Creative Publishers, 1958), 204-05.

the strikers from the pulpit, blacklisting forced many workers to abandon their jobs and leave for the mainland.[7] The strike dragged on for 29 weeks (into the month of November) before a depleted group of machinists conceded defeat, the moulders having returned to humiliating terms in August. The strike broke the back of the IAM and it formally disbanded January 1906.[8] Labour leaders reasoned that part of the backlash from city industrialists was due to the IAM's attempt to organize a city trades and labour council. These events only served to drive labour and capital farther from one another and the ramifications of this division would take on greater significance in the years to come when a new group of workers would seek to bring about the changes fought for by their predecessors. The vehicle for this change would be the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association.

For its leadership and ideological direction the NIWA had the services of an unusual and eclectic group of talented individuals. The men and women who provided the union with its impetus and guidance shared between themselves a considerable background in labour unionism and in local and national politics. In addition, many had

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[7]Chisholm, "Hang Her Down," 32. Many moulders and machinists left Newfoundland for Sydney, Sackville, Yarmouth and other parts of Canada and the United States.

[8]Ibid., The moulders were forced to return to work in "open shop" conditions.

considerable familiarity with socialist literature. Amongst this group several key figures emerged to guide the Association's development and these individuals merit examination. One such leader was George F. Grimes. Grimes, an avowed socialist, traced his political origins back to his involvement in the Newfoundland Socialist Party, a movement formed 1906 whose "leading spirit," Robert E. Scott, was a member of the mainland SPC, the major marxist socialist group in Canada at that time.[9] Grimes's commitment to social reform also stemmed from his Methodist religion, and he served as a lay preacher for that church. Grimes was also a long-term member of the Methodist College Literary Institute (MCLI), a local debating society which frequently discussed important social issues of the day. As the Unionist MHA for Port de Grave from 1913 to 1919 (and later the member respectively for Fogo, Twillingate, and Lewisporte), he continued to proclaim his links to socialist thought.[10] Often des-

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[9]David Frank and Nolan Reilly, "The Emergence of the Socialist Movement in the Maritimes, 1899-1916," in Robert J. Brym and R. James Sacouman, Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada. (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1979), 102.

[10]Tucker, "The Old NIWA," 279-81; Who's Who In and From Newfoundland (St. John's: R. Hibbs Publishers, 1927), 199; The Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador vol. 2, ed. J.R. Smallwood (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1984), 749. The Union Party was the political wing of the Fishermen's Protective Union, led by W.F. Coaker. In 1913, its first elected members sat in the House of Assembly.

cribed as the "most intellectual of the thirteen Fishermen's Protective Union MHA's," Grimes established a strong reputation as an activist for social change. The son of William Grimes, then Superintendent of the Constabulary, George Grimes demonstrated a keen concern for the welfare of Newfoundland's workers which held to a lifelong dedication to progressive politics.[11] He brought to the NIWA a knowledge gained from these experiences which was to prove invaluable in shaping the Association's ideology.

Central to the leadership of the NIWA was Warwick Smith. The son of The Reverend Canon Walter R. Smith, Warwick was educated at the elite Bishop Feild College and later made a self-directed study of the law while serving as secretary to the Attorney General for five years.[12] Despite this comfortable middle-class upbringing, Smith was to gain first-hand knowledge of manual labour when he left Newfoundland to take up a series of jobs in occupations ranging from a steel mill worker and a railroad construction gang member to a clerk in a Philadelphia department store.[13] These experiences had a profound influence on the formation of Smith's personal ideology.

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[11] For a brief biographical sketch see, Melvin Baker, "George F. Grimes," Newfoundland Quarterly, 80 (1) Summer 1984, 22.

[12] Evening Telegram, 22 January 1962, obituary of Warwick Smith.

[13] Daily Star (St. John's), 22 January 1918.

Politically, Smith's writings display a strong interest in labourism and it was his contention that the NIWA should engage in politics through an independent party founded "to conserve the interests of labour alone."[14] Disillusioned with established parties and weary of the "special privileges" distributed amongst the social elite, Smith sought the implementation of extensive legislative reforms designed to improve the lives of the working poor. In this he was influenced by Methodist philosophies concerning social reform and he frequently cited their pamphlets in his arguments.[15] As a member of the NIWA Executive Committee Warwick Smith was often called upon to address the general membership on matters of Association policy. This he did with considerable gusto, often interjecting quotations from Plato or Thomas More. Smith's services as the Association's informal public relations officer regularly brought him before the public's eye. An articulate and passionate writer, Warwick Smith's persuasive articles were frequently read on the pages of the St. John's daily newspapers. It was in this capacity as a writer and advocate for the working-class voice that he excelled. During the war, Smith's

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[14] Daily Star, 5 January 1918. For an extended discussion of labourism in Canada, see Craig Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class," Labour/Le Travail, 13 (Spring 1984), 45-76.

[15] The Industrial Worker (St. John's), vol. 1 (1), 18 May 1918, see Smith's article, "Methodism and Labour."

work had a considerable effect in swaying public opinion on numerous issues vital to the growth and development of the fledgling Association. When the NIWA formed its bi-monthly newspaper, The Industrial Worker, in May 1918, Smith served both on its board of directors and as its main editorial contributor.[16] Individuals such as Warwick Smith enriched the Association with their talents and played a major role in presenting its critique of Newfoundland's industrial autocracy.

In addition to George Grimes and Warwick Smith, the NIWA was successful in attracting the active participation of many St. John's unions. Prominent members of this group included many chief executives of local labour groups and a listing of their backgrounds serves to illustrate this point. From the Journeymen Coopers' Union came president William L. Linegar. In Linegar's lengthy involvement with this craft union he gained first-hand experience in the various attempts made to form a city trades and labour council. This included the abortive 1905 move led by the machinists. In 1919, Linegar would gain further fame as the primary candidate for the NIWA-sponsored Workingmen's Party. Other labour leaders

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[16] Ibid, "Smith was the most intelligent of the labour agitators, he was an agitator at the time, no question about it, but he was an intelligent fellow and wrote well." Interview with Dr. Raymond Gushue by R. Hattenhauer, 14 May 1967, MUNELA, tape C-7222. Dr. Gushue served as President of Memorial University between 1952-1966.

involved with the Association included Frederick Goff, president of the Carpenters' and Joiners' Union and another member of the NIWA's Executive Committee; Kenneth Ruby, past-president of the Tinsmiths' Union and frequent candidate in municipal and national elections; and Jonas Barter, president of the Truckmen's Protective Union. President Frank J. Woods brought his Firemens' Union into the Association's fold and this contributed the presence of a union well-known for its militancy.[17] Two further prominent labour representatives who did not formally unite with the NIWA, but who maintained a close working relationship in this period, were Michael F. Quigley and James J. "Big Jim" McGrath. Quigley was president of Local 703 of the International Typographical Union, while the venerable McGrath, as president of the powerful LSPU, was probably the most respected of St. John's labour leaders.[18]

The Association also benefitted from the talents of numerous individuals with past experience in trade movements. Among these was Thomas M. White, a self-employed carriage maker and former president of the

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[17] Daily Star, 6 April 1918, "The firemen were familiarly known to the Association as the 'Black Watch'." On St. John's waterfront unions, see Jessie Chisholm, "Strikes in Newfoundland, 1890-1914" (unpublished research paper, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1986).

[18] McGrath's stature as a union leader is discussed in, "Labor Organizations in Newfoundland," The Christmas Echo, (St. John's) vol. 2 (1917), 16-17.

Mechanic's Society. The Mechanic's Society was in the forefront of the 1897 Affiliations Movement, an early attempt to unite St. John's trade unions.[19] Walter A. O'D. Kelly, with his past involvement in the political arena, was another familiar name to local workers.[20] The NIWA could also depend on a group of gifted orators which included W.J. "Billy" Willar, Michael A. Foley, and John Cadwell. Willar's talent for public speaking was such that one young Association member, Joseph R. Smallwood, later described him as "the finest natural orator I ever knew."[21] The NIWA also enjoyed the regular input of many remaining St. John's labour groups who sent delegates to weekly meetings. These included: the baker's, plumber's, shoemaker's, moulder's, and shipwright's unions. Far from being a worker's movement isolated from influential circles, the Association was a potent force for social change.

An examination of the Constitution and By-Laws of the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association provides some indications as to the organizational structure of this

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[19]Bill Gillespie, "A History of the Newfoundland Federation of Labor" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1980), 13-14. The Affiliations Movement is further explained in Chapter 2.

[20]Walter A. O'D. Kelly was St. John's building supplies dealer who also had an extensive background in municipal politics.

[21]Interview with J.R. Smallwood by Rolf Hattenhauer, 27 January 1968, MUNFLA, tape C-7247.

group. Preliminary drafts of the constitution were discussed soon after the Association's founding in April 1917. There is evidence of a spirited interest in the ideological direction the union was to follow as the debates continued for some time, reaching their greatest intensity during that first summer and early fall. Sections of the constitution regularly came up for approval before meetings of both the union's Executive Committee and in the general assemblies held each Friday evening at the Longshoremen's Protective Union (LSPU) Hall. Association members brought to the union varied and extensive backgrounds in various facets of labour and civic organizations, and the protracted discussions on constitutional matters reflects this diversity. Finally a consensus was reached and the new constitution gained a successful vote of approval on 19 September 1917.[22] Owing to persistent demands for copies of this document, the Association's executive hurriedly moved to have it printed and made available without delay. Early in the New Year a newspaper reference notes that copies of these pamphlets, nomination forms, and other union literature were being extensively distributed to St. John's members and sent out across the Island in reply to the numerous inquiries received from workers interested in forming NIWA bran-

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[22] Daily News (St. John's), 29 September 1917.

ches.[23]

A high degree of organizational expertise was present in the Association activities from the start. Indicative of this coordination was the manner in which membership applications were handled. Taking full advantage of the initial excitement their union generated, the NIWA moved to parlay this interest into concrete membership figures. The extent of outside curiosity may be judged from the range of requests for organizational literature. Inquiries were sent in from communities across the colony. These included: Whitbourne, Grand Falls, Port-aux-Basques, Clarenville, Millertown, Corner Brook, Botwood and Harbour Grace.[24] While these locations were positioned on the line of the Newfoundland Railway, there were many additional requests forwarded from other settlements such as Gander Bay, Twillingate, and Port-aux-Port, which were not directly connected with this service.[25] Workers on Bell Island also asked for details on the NIWA as the word spread about this new organization. These letters and telegrams ensured that the Association's principles would gain an audience outside the city limits of St. John's.

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[23]Daily Star, 19 January 1918.

[24]Ibid., 26 January 1918.

[25]Ibid., 9 February 1918; Evening Advocate, 1 June 1918.

The constitution of the NIWA sets forth the procedures to be followed in establishing the union's executive body. The Association was to have a president, first and second vice-presidents, a treasurer, financial and recording secretaries, and a marshal. In addition to these executives, a nine member committee was created to act in support of the main executive body.[26] All executives were subject to an annual vote by the general membership. An elaborate system of internal auditors was provided to scrutinize the Association's accounts and recommend executive salaries. The NIWA sought to expand further the participation of its members by adopting the extensive use of special committees formed to address specific matters concerning the union. These committees were successful in drawing a growing number of members into the active decision-making process. Newspaper accounts of the Association's annual meetings indicate that places on the executive Committee were regularly contested, with several candidates for each position. While there remained a degree of continuity in the union's executive, there was also a healthy turnover of serving members. The enthusiastic and committed participation in the Association is indicative of a vibrant organization as opposed to one burdened with an immobile bureaucratic structure. Rank-and-file members were free to criticise executive direc-

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[26] Evening Telegram, 20 October 1917.

tions and frequently did so. Unlike most of the city's established craft unions, the NIWA executive did not need to admonish its members for lack of attendance, rather the difficulty centred upon a lack of seating for regular meetings.[27] The exceptional circumstances of a wartime society reflects the remarkable interest directed at the formation of this workers' movement.

The NIWA constitution made provision for the establishment of three major funds for the benefit of its members.[28] The first of these was termed the "general fund" and it was to provide for routine expenses such as: executive salaries, property rental fees, an advertising budget, and operation costs of the Association's fortnightly newspaper. The second pool was for a "mortuary fund" for the provision of fifty dollars to the families of deceased members. The last resource was for a "strike fund" to cover basic living expenses for members engaged in a strike or lockout. These funds were supported from the collection of membership fees amounting to $12^1/_2$ cents per month for both the general and mortuary funds, and 5 cents per month for the strike fund. Additional revenues were usually added to the general fund but could be allocated elsewhere as needed. The existence of such a strike fund serves to illustrate that the NIWA did not

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[27] Ibid., 27 June 1917; Daily Star, 12 January 1918.

[28] NIWA Constitution, Article 8, Sections 1-8.

simply function as the Newfoundland equivalent of the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress.[29] The NIWA also incorporated some unusual articles in its constitution, for example, in its rules for membership.

Qualifications for membership in the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association were formulated to provide for a degree of flexibility in the recruitment of new members. The general rule for admission was that "all persons of sixteen years of age and upwards to fifty-four years, engaged in any useful occupation may become members of the Association."[30] Notice that the phrase "useful occupation" allowed for a broadened scope of members beyond only those "who earn their living by manual work."[31] The Association sought people who not only worked with their hands but also those who laboured in less physical surroundings. This was to be a union "comprising men who wield a pickaxe as well as those who push the pen."[32] This provided for the incorporation of a broad spectrum of backgrounds and talents which would prove critically important to the development of the Association. The qualifications were also framed to allow

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[29]The Canadian TLC as a matter of policy left the administration of strike funds to their federated unions.

[30]NIWA Constitution, Article 4, Section 1.

[31]Evening Telegram, 23 June 1917.

[32]Daily Star, 9 February 1918.

"all persons employing regularly less than twelve persons" and this gives some indication of the union's interest in attracting small-scale shopowners.[33] Amongst those excluded from membership were management and supervisory staff of the large commercial enterprises. Yet the constitution was generally inclusive, rather than exclusive, in its terminology. Regular candidates for admission to the union, if accepted, were to pay an initiation fee of one dollar and monthly dues of thirty cents. The age limit of fifty-four years was probably intended to ease the financial burden on older workers for those over this age could join as honorary members and "enjoy all the privileges of the Association" while only having responsibility for half the entrance fee and monthly dues.[34] Honorary members were excluded from the mortuary benefits and this could be interpreted as signifying that the Association envisioned this fund as functioning more in the manner of a supplement to any workmen's compensation award, rather than a mortuary benefit. The Association continually placed the redrafting of the Workmen's Compensation Board high on its list of demands to the House of Assembly.[35]

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[33] NIWA Constitution, Article 4, Section 4.

[34] Ibid., Article 7, Section 1-3.

[35] Evening Telegram, 30 June 1917. The Workmen's Compensation Act (1908) provided for limited payments in cases of job-related injury, but the monetary amounts had

In addition to these sections two further clauses demonstrate the NIWA's ambitious future plans. Intending to weaken the economic grip of the Water Street merchants and assail the hegemony of the political autocracy, the Association sought to "establish co-operative stores" and to "pay the election expenses and contribute to the support of candidates for the legislature."[36] With regard to co-operative stores, the desire for such a working-class controlled institution in St. John's can be traced back at least to a similar attempt in 1905. During that turbulent spring twelve years earlier craftsworkers, spurred on by the machinists, moved to form a city-wide trades and labour council which included in its mandate the formation of a "co-operative to sell all manner of necessities more cheaply."[37] That initiative foundered after a lengthy strike, but it only forced the postponement of the co-operative concept until the war years rekindled a new mood of working-class defiance. In a similar vein the political option would be taken up at the first available opportunity in 1919. By proceeding in this fashion the Association followed the example set by

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not risen since the Acts' inception and were, by 1917, grossly inadequate.

[36] NIWA Constitution, Article 2, Section 7-8.

[37] St. John's Journeymen Coopers' Minutes, 12 April 1905. (Manuscript located in the Maritime History Archives, Memorial University of Newfoundland).

the Fishermen's Protective Union several years earlier. The fishermen sought to break the exploitative "truck" system of credit accounts while simultaneously introducing political reforms by gaining entry to the House of Assembly through the FPU's political wing, the Union Party.[38]

An examination of the rapid growth and expansion of the NIWA provides evidence to support the contention that this movement caught the imagination of Newfoundland's workers. Starting with 35 members in April 1917, the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association grew into a union which by the following April claimed a membership roll of over 3,500 members, of whom 2,800 alone resided in St. John's.[39] What had begun as a modest association of metal workers from the Reid Newfoundland Company rapidly became a thriving industrial union with a broadly-based appeal. The numbers gain greater significance when placed in the context of census statistics. Despite somewhat vague data on St. John's workers, the NIWA's membership represented over 20 per cent of the total labour force, and this percentage does not distinguish industrial workers from such amorphous groups as domestic lab-

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[38] Ian McDonald, "W.F. Coaker and the Fishermen's Protective Union in Newfoundland Politics, 1909-1925," (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1971).

[39] Daily Star, 2 April 1918.

ourers.[40] If one charts the union's growth during this period some indication may be gained of this movement's appeal which could boast of meetings "filled to the doors" with overflow crowds.[41]

Throughout the remaining months of 1917 and on into the New Year the NIWA concept proved exceptionally attractive to a working class which had long experienced the privations of an unjust society. The Association processed a flood of membership requests in numbers which quickly surpassed even the most optimistic initial prospects.[42] The NIWA had struck a responsive cord the vibrations of which were spreading across the Island. Beginning with an average increase of 100 members for the first two months, union figures numbered its card holders at 475 by the middle of June 1917, and at 555 one week later.[43] Soon each regular gathering had between 50 and 100 new applicants. The total figures soared: 609 (14 July), 703 (21 July), 825 (18 August), 930 (4 October), continuing unabated into the winter months. By January 1918, the Association reported an average growth of 500

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[40] Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1911, 1921; see also, David Alexander, "Newfoundland's Traditional Economy and Development to 1937," Acadiensis, 5 (2), Spring 1976, 50-73.

[41] Daily Star, 2 February 1918.

[42] Evening Telegram, 21 July 1917.

[43] Daily News, 7 July 1917.

new members per month.[44] Daily newspapers, quoting NIWA officials, made claims to a rank-and-file body exceeding 2,000 by February. Not a single meeting passed without the addition of scores of new signatures to the roll book. Observers of this phenomenon noted that the Association had "set a record for this country as regards to its rapid growth."[45] These developments were cause for consternation amongst St. John's businessmen and the frequency of their letters to the press attest to their alarm. Newfoundlanders were warned that the Association's "advanced ideas" may prove to be a "menace to the existing institutions" and "established customs."[46] The tone of these comments was also a reflection of the wave of labour unrest which was then sweeping the capital city. Working people were openly protesting the contempt shown them by the colony's elite. This dissention would dominate the remaining wartime months and carry on past the Armistice.

Spring 1917 arrived bringing with it foul weather and an angry mood of protest. St. John's employers were soon besieged with demands for wage increases from every sector of the labour force. May began with a halt to construction projects as the building trades struck for a revised

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[44] Daily Star, 19 January 1918.

[45] Evening Telegram, 21 July 1917.

[46] Daily Star, 19 January 1918.

pay schedule.[47] The city's Master Builders' Association fearing the establishment of a wage precedent firmly opposed the plumbers, masons, bricklayers, and carpenters. Yet it was the tradesmen who showed the greater resolve and two weeks later they returned to work having secured their adjustment.[48] Stationary firemen, teamsters, tinsmiths, and coopers were quick to follow this example. In a letter to the editor of the Evening Telegram a citizen voiced this concern: "Almost every day now there is a branch of skilled workmen making demands on their employers for more wages."[49] As if to support this contention, city painters stopped work and added their lot to the growing protest. Complaints on wage rates were not limited to private business as teachers, sanitation and asylum workers also contributed their demands.[50] The threat of a further escalation was raised when members of the Constabulary indicated their own displeasure through the daily press. They claimed that having been underpaid before the war they were now considerably "worse off" as

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[47] Evening Telegram, 1 May 1917.

[48] Ibid., 11 May 1917. The Newfoundland Master Builders' Association was incorporated 5 June 1915 and functioned to negotiate contracts and workplace disputes with the building trades unions.

[49] Ibid., 15 May 1917.

[50] Ibid., 13 May 1917.

the cost-of-living knew no ceiling.[51] The NIWA remaining skeptical of the government's political will, sanctioned direct action to force change. Their target was to be the Reid Newfoundland Company. On 29 June, over 300 machine shop and dry dock employees walked off the job demanding an "all round" wage increase of 25 per cent.[52] Reid responded with a 10 per cent offer, which was rejected by the Association. The strikers returned to work the next day accepting a revised offer of 15 per cent, retroactive to 1 June.[53] This was neither the first nor last strike to be directed at Reid Newfoundland during this period as the company was to be the major focus of labour's protests.

This series of wartime strikes continued into the fall and winter months as two major disputes figured prominently on the pages of St. John's newspapers. The first concerned the Newfoundland Boot and Shoe Company and its unionized shoemakers. These workers left their jobs on 6 October over the now familiar complaint of low wages. The shoemakers, members of the International Boot and Shoe

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[51] Ibid., 14 May 1917. Newfoundland followed the Canadian pattern of public service sector strikes during 1918-1919. In Montreal municipal workers and policemen engaged in a series of protests during the strike-filled year of 1919. See, Geoffrey Ewen, "La Contestation Ouvrière à Montréal En 1919," Bulletin RCHTQ, 36, 12, 2 (Automne 1986), 37-62.

[52] Ibid., 29 June 1917.

[53] Daily News, 29 June 1917.

Worker's Union (an AFL affiliate), were well aware that other craft unions had secured increases of between 30 to 40 per cent since the outbreak of the war and they sought this as well.[54] The LSPU had also managed a 50 per cent hike for its waterfront workers.[55] In a letter to the Evening Telegram a supporter of the strike plainly presented his case: "We can say without exaggeration that a man cannot procure the barest necessities of life from the paltry dole that they receive from the Company."[56] Not only was their standard of living deteriorating, but a unequal wage structure resulted in great disparities between factory employees. While a few special skills commanded $15 per week, most workers had to make do with $11-$12. Other employees with up to twenty years experience only made $8 or $9. In one case an old hand with 25 years time at his bench took home just $7 per week. Even by Newfoundland's depressed wage standards this was grossly insufficient for a family man.[57] The shoeworkers also complained of seasonal layoffs of five to six weeks duration. The striking workers were given both moral and financial support from the NIWA despite the fact that there was no formal affiliation between the two. Unfor-

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[54] Evening Telegram, 29 October 1917.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., 30 October 1917.

tunately this support and that of other labour groups was not enough to hold out against a determined employer and the strike, having dragged on into November, lost its momentum and collapsed. Yet this was one of a few losses in this period of labour activism. 1917 would draw to a close on a positive note in this respect.

In December the final strike in a year of unrest was to pit the Newfoundland Express Company (a Reid subsidiary) against its teamsters. This issue was once again wages and working conditions. Initially, the expressmen had presented Reid officials with a petition requesting an increase to their present wage of $11.25 per week.[58] The company following its usual procedure fired the workers' representative who had tendered the petition, a man named Colford, and threatened similar action for any further protests. Colford's dismissal sparked a spontaneous strike followed by a plea for NIWA intervention.[59] The Association, although disgruntled by the unilateral actions of the expressmen, quickly agreed to act on their behalf. This intervention by the NIWA brought about a marked change in the attitude of the Reid Company, which

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[58] Ibid., 15 December 1917; The militancy of the teamsters in this period is similar to that experienced in Canada, especially in Calgary and Edmonton. See, David J. Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations and the General Strike (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974), 61, and passim.

[59] Ibid., 15 December 1917.

was no doubt bolstered by the Association's rumoured plans for a complete shutdown of company operations.[60] The strength of numbers now played an effective role for St. John's labour. A deputation, including NIWA vice-president Edward Whitty, Samuel Merils, and Warwick Smith, met with Reid's general superintendent J.P. Powell and signed a settlement within several days. The result was an impressive victory for the union: Colford was reinstated, wage increases granted, and several concessions on job security were promised. Even half of the lost wages were to be refunded.[61]

This strike marked the second direct confrontation between the NIWA and the Reid Newfoundland Company and the experience could only instill confidence in the union's capabilities. Reports of the strike's outcome were recounted with obvious satisfaction by Association executives in published newspaper accounts. This was appropriate for the daily press had served as the chosen medium for the NIWA's campaign for public support. Born of a fervent conviction for social equality, this strategic manoeuvre was designed to appeal directly to the libertarian ideology of many average citizens. The architecture for this scheme came from the talented pen of Warwick Smith. In place of the usual terse and bitter

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[60] Daily News, 15 December 1917.

[61] Evening Telegram, 14 December 1917.

notes dashed off by most unions, Smith constructed lengthy arguments carefully articulating the workers' perspective. Freely invoking a past rhetorical style celebrating the "nobility of labour" and the "manliness" of collective self-help, Smith proved himself an effective advocate in the battle of words. Through his letters the NIWA seized the high moral ground in the debates addressing the expressmen's dispute, and the current pandemic of working-class revolt. The Association claimed it was fighting for the "principle of free speech" by siding with the dismissed teamster Colford. This argument was embellished by harnessing some of the patriotic imagery familiar to wartime readers.[62] For Smith, this issue was a fight for the right in the best traditions of his British ancestors.[63] Smith's approach to drape himself in the Union

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[62]G.S. Kealey, "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt," Labour/Le Travail, 13 (Spring 1984), 11-44. As in Canada, World War I was a profoundly nationalistic experience. For Newfoundlanders, the ordeal was considered a true test of nationhood, so much so that the term "Dominion" replaced "colony" after the Armistice. For Newfoundland see, Patricia R. O'Brien, "The NPA and the War Effort," passim; for Canada see, Russell Hann, Introduction. The Great War and Canadian Society, comp., Daphne Read (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1978), 9-38; The use of extensive war propaganda is often cited as an underlying factor in the rise of working-class protest in Western Canada. For example see, John Herd Thompson, The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918, The Canadian Social History Series (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 33-44.

[63]In an article entitled, "The Case of the Expressmen," Evening Telegram, 17 December 1917, Warwick Smith presented his argument in typical fashion: "Over the principle of Free Speech, many a blood stained

Jack left Reid officials without a rejoinder sufficient to sway public opinion for doing so would criticise all that was apparently sacred to a society supported by the principles of meritocracy and patriotism.

During this period of intense strike activity the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association involved itself in a wide range of activities directed at improving the lives of the working class. Association members put forward a platform of extensive social reforms. Central to these reforms was a concern over the cost-of-living and the government's promise to establish a board of food control similar to those existing in Britain and Canada. The NIWA made repeated claims for a major representation on this board on behalf of the working people. The Association requested that at least two-thirds of the suggested fifteen appointments be "chosen from the industrial classes as nominated by the industrial classes."[64] Concern over this matter was sufficient for the Association to elicit the support of several city craft union presidents to form a deputation which meet with the Prime Minister Edward Morris in late June 1917.[65] But

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battlefield has paid the price of that freedom .., Our fathers laid down their lives to maintain this liberty. Shall we make their sacrifice a vain one and bind upon our children the shackles of slavery?"

[64] Ibid., 26 July 1917.

[65] Daily News, 29 June 1917.

Morris, and his successor William Lloyd, were to frustrate labour leaders as the food board's eventual composition was to have only five members, none of which could be even remotely connected with labour interests.[66]

The NIWA also focused its attentions to a series of important social reforms and projects in the period between May 1917 to March 1918. Some of these projects were of an immediate and practical nature such as the decision to import winter coal supplies directly from the Cape Breton mines therefore bypassing local merchants who were coming under increasing scrutiny for their tonnage rates. By early June, the Association's standing Co-operative Committee had approved the plan to import an initial shipment of 100 tons on a subscription basis. The demand proved so great that the order had to be doubled to 200 tons and a special Coal Committee formed to deal with the influx of requests.[67] When the coal arrived in St. John's in November the Association reported that it had been secured for $1.50 per ton less than the local rate for a total saving of $112. The Coal Committee also noted with satisfaction that every purchaser of coal received an extra 400 pounds of coal as a bonus.[68] This example of the Association's initiative demonstrates their commitment

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[66] Ibid., 14 July 1917.

[67] Evening Telegram, 10 November 1917.

[68] Ibid.

to collective self-help plans. The NIWA actively challenged the government to intervene in matters such as war profiteering and long-term social reforms through progressive legislation, yet some members professed to being uncomfortable with plans for extensive state intervention. In the first months of the NIWA's existence members debated the Association's position with regard to the question of government involvement. While some members pushed hard to introduce far reaching reform measures, others, more pragmatic than ideological, called for a limited agenda, such as the importation of coal supplies.

Most NIWA members showed no hesitation when presented with an opportunity to lobby those in positions of influence. The Association sent both messages to, and personal deputations to meet with, the governor, prime minister, members of the House of Assembly or Legislative Council, or any of the Water Street "merchant princes." While actively pressuring the Morris government over the latter's delayed decision on a board of food control, the NIWA was concurrently engaged in several other ventures. These included calls for the erection of a 35 per cent tariff barrier to protect jobs in the local woollen goods industry and a lengthy protest over the government's plans to grant hydroelectric rights for the Mobile River to the Reid Newfoundland Company, thereby extending Reid's

monopoly in public utilities.[69] These types of protests were typical in organizations adhering to the ideological tenets of labourism. As historian Craig Heron points out, during World War I the large industrial monopolies were frequently portrayed as economic "parasites" feeding off the vitality of the "producing classes."[70] Public utility monopolies attracted some of the most withering criticism in this regard. This unrest was translated into calls for the implementation of taxes on war profits and personal incomes over a set limit. Yet this was a "limited critique" not intended to assail the entrepreneurial industrialist or modest businessman who were viewed as kindred "co-producers" in the economic system.[71] In an attempt to allay the fears of fellow co-producers, the NIWA issued the claim that, "the Association stands for fair play, honest businessmen will be safeguarded by them."[72] Rather than advocate revolutionary changes, the NIWA accepted a hierarchical society as long as it was based upon egalitarian principles.[73]

In the first twelve months of its existence the NIWA

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[69] Ibid., 14 November 1917.

[70] Craig Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class," 59.

[71] Ibid., 60.

[72] Evening Telegram, 28 July 1917.

[73] Craig Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class," 60.

laid the groundwork for a growing network of reform measures. Central to these plans was a scheme for a massive door-to-door petition to enlist general support for the Association's eight-hour day campaign.[74] The goal to implement the eight-hour day was a deeply held conviction for most union members. This plan also incorporated a broad slate of social measures concerning many fundamental aspects of working-class life. These matters included legislation to limit child labour, expanded workers' compensation laws, the establishment of a Department of Labour, improved housing for workers, and the public ownership of the utilities.[75] In order to better facilitate these reforms the Association approved a suggestion put forward by Warwick Smith that an independent labour party be established to contest the pending general election.[76] Three candidates each for the ridings of St. John's East and West were to be sponsored by the Association.

During the first months of 1918 union executives were occupied with administering the many requests for membership materials. The first three NIWA branches were established in Port-aux-Basques, Whitbourne, and Grand

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[74] Evening Telegram, 29 September 1917.

[75] Ibid., 30 September 1917.

[76] The next general election was to have been held in 1918, but parliament was prorogued and the matter was not settled until November 1919.

Falls, and the last of these claimed a thriving membership of fifty by mid-January.[77] In February, NIWA president Phillip Bennett, accompanied by Warwick Smith, embarked on a whistlestop campaign along the Newfoundland Railway line from St. John's to the route's terminus at Port-aux-Basques. The venture was highly successful and the men reported the enrollment of "hundreds" of new members.[78]

Plans for a co-operative store in St. John's were well under way by this time. The Association's Co-operative Committee had sold the entire issue of shares in the business for one dollar each, and a system of paper scrip was being distributed to the membership.[79] By early March the reform petition had collected its two thousandth signature with prospects for many more.[80] Progress in the eight-hour petition was interrupted in late March as the Association moved to prepare for what would prove to be a major confrontation between the city unionists and the Reid Newfoundland Company.

Throughout that spring of 1918 the signs of an impending upheaval were clearly evident. The New Year had begun with a series of wage demands issued from the NIWA's

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[77] Daily Star, 26 January 1918.

[78] Ibid., 9 February 1918.

[79] The co-operative store opened for business on 12 October 1918, and was very successful during the early postwar years.

[80] Evening Telegram, 8 February 1918.

various craft representatives. Wage increases from 20-35 per cent were delivered to the Association's executive, which in turn, were formally presented to Reid management.[81] The Company's employees were not alone in their determination to secure new wage schedules for workers in many of the city's industries had also placed requests for substantial increases through the NIWA.[82] St. John's businessmen, fearing the effect of such a wage escalation, turned to the Island's largest employer for direction. For their part, Reid Newfoundland sought to present an outward impression of confidence. The Company had dealt with many strike situations in the past and now was not the time to move away from their characteristic attitude. Satisfied that no additional funds need be allocated to the payroll, President H.D. Reid himself initialled an order to be placed with a Canadian manufacturer for the construction of a new railway coach valued at $50,000.[83] The order was dated 8 March 1918. Soon the president and his associates would have cause to debate the wisdom of this expenditure.

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[81] Daily Star, 2 February 1918.

[82] Ibid., 9 February 1918.

[83] Ibid., 11 April 1918.

Chapter Five

"All Solid Along The Line,": The Reid Newfoundland Strike, 1918.

The chronology of events which led to the NIWA's strike action against the Reid Newfoundland Company is one of a series of moves and countermoves between the Association and the Company which gradually escalated into a confrontation of major proportions. The immediate issue was one of wages, but to restrict an investigation of the strike to this matter alone would be to overlook a further range of issues, the origins of which may be traced back through years of frustration. Since the outbreak of war in August 1914, working-class Newfoundlanders had been subjected to a significant fall in real wages caused by stagnant wages levels and a dramatic increase in the cost-of-living. By early 1918 prices for basic commodities had far outstripped the relative earning power of workers. The re-structuring of the wage scales became a matter of vital importance and one which provided the key impetus in the Association's efforts to secure an across-the-board increase for their members employed at Reid Newfoundland.[1] Beyond the issue of wages lay a number of problems which

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[1] PANL, GN2/5/344: Colonial Secretary. Special Subject Files. Letter from NIWA Recording Secretary W.J. Nauffts to Reid General Superintendent J.P. Powell, 13 March 1918. "Your Company has increased rates since August 1914, in some cases over 500 per cent.... Yet some employees have received increases as low as 6 per cent, and some have received absolutely nothing."

were potentially more complicated to resolve. These involved the critical matter of job classifications for the various shop divisions and departments in the diverse Reid operations.[2] The Association sought to establish a clear set of standards for wage levels based on skills and experience in a range of craft distinctions. Other issues included overtime regulations, grievance and dismissal procedures, and special privileges for employees.[3] Many of these concerns had been left unresolved for years, waiting for a strong collective voice to present them effectively to Reid officials.

The wage issue reached a critical point in early 1918 when in a series of meetings of the NIWA's Shop Committees workers met to outline their specific demands. These committees were formed from departmental divisions within the Reid Company's operations and they drew together workers with similar craft backgrounds. For example, several of these groupings included "boiler makers and

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[2]During the World War I years machinists struggled to combat management attempts to dilute their crafts skills with the introduction of a variety of skills levels created by "scientific management." See, David Montgomery, Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 124-25.

[3]A full report of the NIWA - Reid settlement was reprinted from The Industrial Worker in the Evening Advocate, 15 June 1918. The "special privileges" referred to the right of workers to purchase home heating coal at cost, and for the distribution of yearly railway passes for employees and their families, based on job seniority.

iron shop workers," in one unit, while another consisted of "car shop workers," which covered such trades as carpenters, painters and moulders.[4] Wage proposals based on revised job classifications formulated at the shop committee level were passed on to the NIWA executive which reviewed them and formally submitted the package to Reid General Superintendent J.P. Powell. The first of these submissions (dated 5 February) outlined wage increases of between 20-35 per cent, with the larger portions going to those employees who were at the lower end of the wage scale.[5] This initial letter was followed by several further notes detailing wage hikes, job classifications, and overtime rates for workers in a range of skilled and unskilled categories from marine engineers to general labourers and railway cleaning staff.[6] The Company's response was twofold: to request further details from the Association, while still refusing to set a date for negotiations. A series of letters was exchanged between the union and Reid management which failed to establish a timeframe for concrete negotiations.

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[4]Each craft was represented by a separate committee along the lines of a shop stewards' committee. See, interview with Thomas C. Noel by Rolf Hattenhauer, 26 May 1967, Memorial University Folklore and Language Archives (MUNFLA), tape C-7232.

[5]PANL, GN2/5/344. W.J. Nauffts to J.P. Powell, 5 February 1918.

[6]Ibid., 8, 11 February 1918.

While the correspondence between the NIWA and Reid executives maintained a restrained formality, privately both groups were busy making arrangements for contingency plans in the event of a walkout. Company president H.D. Reid had requested a substantial increase in the government subsidies provided to the coastal steamer service and the passenger and freight rates on the Newfoundland Railway.[7] In a letter to the prime minister, Reid described the NIWA's wage demands as "excessive and impossible" and estimated that they would increase the payroll by "not less than $350,000 per annum."[8] As pressure was being applied on the government, Reid officials attempted to undermine the Association's preparations by sending Company agents out along the railway line to intimidate union members.[9] Anticipating this move, the NIWA had already gauged its strength outside St. John's when president Bennett and executive member Warwick Smith travelled the main line to the railhead at Port-aux-Basques on 9 February.[10] The Association wrote Reid informing them that they were aware of the Company's tactics to "spread dissention in our

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[7]PANL, GN 8/3. Prime Minister's Office. W.F. Lloyd Papers. Letter from H.D. Reid to W.F. Lloyd, 6 March 1918.

[8]Ibid.

[9]PANL, GN 2/5/344. W.J. Nauffts to J.P. Powell, 13 March 1918.

[10]Daily News (St. John's), 9 February 1918.

ranks ... [and] colour is given this idea by the reports we have received that your assistants have been discussing matters with our members on the railway in a manner calculated to set one class of employees against another."[11] Relations between Reid Newfoundland and the NIWA were seriously inflamed with the Company's summary dismissal of several "mechanics and labourers" with considerable job seniority from the boiler, marine and carpenters shops.[12] The men claimed they were given no explanation for the action which was taken despite a December 1917 agreement that such dismissals would only occur with due notice for specific infractions of the railway rule book.[13]

Frustrated in their dealings with the Company, the NIWA sought to elicit the support of the Newfoundland Board of Trade.[14] Despite the Board of Trade's obvious sympathy with Water Street interests, this move was not without value for the board had "come to play such a large

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Evening Advocate, 15 June 1918.

[13] PANL, GN 2/5/344. W.J. Nauffts to J.P. Powell 14 March 1918. This agreement was reached during the NIWA's strike of the Newfoundland Express Company (a Reid company). For a discussion of that strike, see chapter 4.

[14] PANL, P/8/B/11. Newfoundland Board of Trade, Correspondence 1917-1918. 22 March 1918. The Association's belief that the justice of their cause would be self-evident indicates a naive approach which was characteristic in this group's dealings with St. John's capitalists.

part in the activities of the community that its presiding officer had come to be regarded as second only to the prime minister himself."[15] In their letter of 22 March 1918, the Association stated that they found themselves "compelled in self-defence to take drastic action" unless the board could arrange to intervene.[16] Yet they responded indifferently stating that it was "quite impossible" to meet before reviewing the case thoroughly.[17] Meanwhile, the government continued to affect a neutral posture and also declined to assist union members in any negotiations. The NIWA stated that the issues at stake were not limited to this dispute as the Association's membership encompassed far more than Reid employees. "The interests of the people of this Dominion concern us quite as much as they do any class in the community."[18] Faced with this impasse the NIWA acted decisively, and by a secret ballot, voted to strike.[19]

The decision to strike passed by an "overwhelming

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[15] Newfoundland Quarterly (St. John's), 16, 1 (Spring 1916), 20.

[16] PANL, P/8/B/11. W.J. Nauffts to Ernest Payne, Secretary, Board of Trade, 22 March 1918.

[17] Ibid., Ernest Payne to W.J. Nauffts, 25 March 1918.

[18] PANL, GN 8/3. W.J. Nauffts to W.F. Lloyd, 28 March 1918.

[19] Evening Advocate, 15 June 1918.

majority" anxious to put their plans into action.[20] The following day, a newspaper editorial summed up the mood of the Association, "It was felt that the men would have the sympathy and support of the public in their struggle."[21] Prior to the walkout, Powell was sent a terse note by NIWA Secretary W.J. Nauffts telling him of the Association's intentions: "I am directed to inform you that a general strike will be called tomorrow Wednesday [27 March] of all employees working in St. John's. Watchmen will not be called out, but all other departments will be called out later if necessary."[22]

The Reid Newfoundland strike commenced exactly as planned at 11:00 a.m. sharp. Workers, anxious to demonstrate a unified front, followed their pre-arranged schedules to the letter. One newspaper account described some of the proceedings in detail:

> Lined up in front of the express [company] were the express drivers and truckmen, and as the signal was given, drove down Water Street to the stable at the rear of the electric light department on Horwood's warf, where they stabled their horses. At the same time six street cars lined up on Water Street at the foot of Adelaide Street, and proceeding west, the motormen backed their cars into the yard. Everything was done in a quiet

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Daily Star, 27 March 1918.

[22] PANL, GN 8/3. W.J. Nauffts to J.P. Powell, 26 March 1918.

and orderly manner.[23]

Meanwhile, at the railway shops electricians, engineers, machinists, boilermakers, blacksmiths, and general labourers downed their tools and left the company premises.[24] The workmen were also joined by clerical staff in the plant's offices.[25] The NIWA executive informed the newspapers that the next day's express train to Port-aux-Basques would be allowed to leave the city, while the fate of future trains would be considered by the Association pending further developments. This decision would also apply to the Reid company's steamship operations. Further, the Reid employees at the Petty Harbour hydro-electric generating plant, a key element in the city's electric power grid, notified the press that they were prepared to leave work if called to do so "in the event of the necessity of bringing still more pressure to bear upon the Company."[26] In all it is estimated that over 500 Reid employees joined in the strike action on the first day of the dispute.[27] The Evening Telegram calculated that this figure represented over 90 per cent of the Association's strength in the St. John's operations of Reid Newfoundland

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[23]Evening Telegram (St. John's), 27 March 1918.

[24]Evening Advocate, 27 March 1918.

[25]Daily Star, 27 March 1918.

[26]Evening Herald (St. John's), 27 March 1918.

[27]Evening Advocate, 27 March 1918.

Company.[28] This estimate was later confirmed by the union's executive in its post-strike report of the final settlement. The NIWA claimed that "fully 97 per cent of all members employed on the Company's premises in town came out, accompanied by others who were not members of the Association."[29] As the NIWA placed their total membership at the time of the strike at 3,500 (2,800 of these resident in St. John's), the Association's threats systematically to apply further pressure on the Reid operations could not be dismissed as mere rhetorical flourish.[30] Nor could Reid Newfoundland turn to other city labour groups to help them through this dispute, as both the Truckmen's Protective Union (TPU) and the powerful Longshoremen's Protective Union (LSPU) had declared their intention to side with the striking workers.[31] This support effectively closed the Reid docks to all shipping activity. In the aftermath of the dispute Governor Harris would report that the strike had "absolutely held up any repairs to ships in the dry dock."[32]

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[28] Evening Telegram, 27 March 1918.

[29] Evening Advocate, 15 June 1918.

[30] Daily Star, 28 March 1918.

[31] Ibid.

[32] CO 194/295. Colonial Office. Governor Alexander Harris' summary of the strike, included in an interim report to the British Colonial Office, Walter H. Long, M.P., Colonial Minister, June 1918.

The Association established its strike headquarters at the LSPU Hall accepting LSPU president James J. McGrath's personal offer.[33] Quickly moving to capture the support of St. John's workers, proposals for a series of city-wide "monster meetings" were discussed. So great was the demand for space at the special NIWA meetings that there was talk of moving from the LSPU Hall into the larger quarters of the Casino Theatre or the British Hall.[34] At every Association meeting scores of new members stepped forward to join the movement as working people realized that the NIWA was seeking to accomplish what no other union group had thus far managed -- to force Reid Newfoundland Company to respect the rights of organized labour.

Coming as it did in wartime, the strike received the immediate attention of the government for the Island's vital transportation links depended on the continued operation of the Reid network. To this end, Prime Minister Lloyd quickly moved to establish channels for negotiations between the two factions. Lloyd's actions were prompted by Governor Alexander Harris who also wished to find a speedy settlement to the dispute. Harris would later write that the strike had "given real anxiety to the

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[33] Daily Star, 28 March 1918.

[34] Ibid., 6 April 1918.

Government."[35] A meeting was set up on the first day of the strike between the NIWA executive and the prime minister.[36] Lloyd requested that the negotiations include T.A. Hall (the Government Engineer) who was to act as an "observer."[37] The following day the Association met with company officials including J.P. Powell and H.D. Reid, but little of consequence was transacted.[38] Talks broke off suddenly when the NIWA learned that Reid was "demanding of the Railroad employees that they sign a statement guaranteeing to stand by the Company against the Association ... and those who refused to sign were threatened with the consequences."[39] The Company denied any use of intimidation instead claiming that they were only seeking to ascertain the strength of their section gangs. H.D. Reid's private papers show that this cynical statement was for public consumption only as both he and Powell had made arrangements to hire strikebreakers shortly before the walkout. Current employees were promised incentives if they would remain at their jobs. A circular distributed throughout the railway line stated that "any men who stand

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[35] CO 194/295. See also, PANL, GN 9/1, Minutes of the Executive Council, 27 March 1918.

[36] PANL, GN 2/5/344.

[37] CO 194/295.

[38] Daily News, 18 March 1918.

[39] PANL, GN 2/5/344.

by the Company at this juncture will be guaranteed their work and otherwise looked after in the future."[40] The fact that Reid officials issued such an offer to employees outside St. John's is testimony to their concern that the strike would soon spread to all sections of the railway line.[41] For those workers who chose to stand against the Company, Reid Newfoundland was ready to start adding names to its blacklist. Writing to a section foreman on the railway line, J.P. Powell stated that, "We have no doubt in here as to how this fight is going to end. Any of our men who are fools enough to go out with this crowd may find some difficulty in getting back in their own positions as heretofore."[42] Reid management did not interpret the strike simply as an ad hoc reaction to wartime inflation as the following comment makes clear: "The fight with the NIWA is about one particular thing -- as to whether they are going to run the Company or whether the Company is going to do business itself."[43] Despite their public and private comments, Reid Newfoundland's tactics

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[40] PANL, P7/B/19, RNCP, J.P. Powell to A. Cobb, Humbermouth, 27 March 1918.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.; In a letter to the prime minister, H.D. Reid states that, "no threats of any nature have been made against, or inducements of any kind held out to any person by this Company." PANL, GN 8/3, H.D. Reid to W.F. Lloyd, 4 April 1918.

only served to drive more of its employees into the NIWA camp as many undecided workers now realized that their best hopes lay with the Association.[44]

From the first day of the strike Reid Newfoundland's dockside operations were at a complete standstill. The Company faced the worrisome prospect of lost revenue and contract defaults as the dispute had effectively closed the dry dock and shipping piers to all traffic. Reid officials had underestimated the NIWA's resolve to stop all dockside labour and as a result were caught with "so many steamers 'in slings'" that many predicted "the Company could not but accede to the demands of the strikers within the next few weeks."[45] Reid management were also experiencing considerable difficulties in locating any replacements for their striking employees. For the Company, this closure came at a critical time as vessels waiting to be serviced crowded the St. John's harbour. Steamers were returning from the annual Spring sealhunt in need of maintenance, while other ships involved in wartime transatlantic trade also sought prompt attention.[46] Reid Newfoundland had invested heavily in

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[44]Daily Star, 1 April 1918.

[45]Evening Herald, 9 April 1918.

[46]Many of the steamers involved in the annual spring sealhunt would have been serviced in the weeks prior to their departure, which was traditionally set on 13 March. No ships were allowed out before 10 March and sealers were expected to return no later than 30 April. Following this

these facilities only to watch them sit idle during this period of record activity. In October 1917, Governor Davidson noted that, "The Dry Dock, which is of large size and commodious, has been constantly occupied during the war time by disabled steamers and must have shown very large profits."[47] The curtailment of Reid operations signalled a major victory, not only for the Association, but for the city's working class in general, for it was at these facilities where numerous early disputes had been fought, and often lost. City longshoremen, and other dockside labourers, had frequently battled Water Street merchants over union recognition, the retention of

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chronology, the ships would have been returning to St. John's during the strike period (27 March-15 April). Any disruption in the sealhunt meant a tremendous loss in revenue for the merchant firms which owned the steamers, and these circumstances placed additional pressure on Reid Newfoundland officials to find a settlement to the dispute. This suggests that the NIWA had planned this strike at a strategic moment during the busy sealhunt season. On the sealhunt see, P.T. McGrath, Newfoundland in 1911 (London: Whitehead, Morris and Company, 1911) 139-40; Levi G. Chafe, Chafe's Sealing Book, third ed. H.M. Mosdell (St. John's: Trade Printers, 1923); D.W. Prowse, A History of Newfoundland (London, 1895; rpt. Toronto: Mika Studio, 1975), 450-51. Les Taylor (a St. John's longshoreman) confirmed that March was one of the most active periods on the dock yards as preparations were made for the sealhunt. See, interview with Les Taylor by R. Hattenhauer, 25 May 1967, MUNFLA, tape C-7246.

[47]Before leaving his post as Governor of Newfoundland, in December 1917, Walter Davidson commented on the operations of the Reid Newfoundland Company to the British Colonial Office. The report was titled "The House of Reid." See, CO 194/293, October 1917.

traditional working practices, and wage schedules.[48] As the largest and most vocal city union, the LSPU had been in the vanguard of this struggle to determine control of the St. John's waterfront.[49] Few employers were as intransigent in these matters as the Reid Newfoundland Company. Reid's staunchly anti-union posture was important because their extensive operations made them the largest industrial enterprise in the colony, therefore the Company acted as the trend-setter in matters of wages and working conditions.[50] The symbolic and practical victory to be gained from the successful assertion of a working-class agenda was not lost on the combined union membership. In this regard the strike served the important

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[48]In the pre-war period, Reid Newfoundland became infamous for its aggressive anti-unionism. Numerous examples exist of disputes between the company and longshoremen, firemen, and other wharf labourers. Often Reid would pay its workers at a rate set considerably below the union scale or traditional rate. During one such dispute in September 1912, an LSPU member complained that his union seemed to lack the ability to force Reid Newfoundland into line with other firms. "Where is the power of the Union if it can't secure from Reid what every other employer is paying." For a more detailed examination of this period, see Jessie Chisholm, "Strikes in Newfoundland, 1890-1914: Preliminary Statistics" (unpublished History Graduate Seminar paper, Memorial University, March 1986).

[49]Estimates of the LSPU's strength place the membership at approximately 2,600 in 1914. See, Evening Telegram, 16 May 1914. Later figures suggest the union's "paid-up" membership at 2,500 in 1917. During peak periods transient workers could raise these numbers appreciably. See, "Labour Organization in Newfoundland," The Christmas Echo (St. John's), vol.2 (1917), 16-17.

[50]Daily Star, 2 April 1918.

function of uniting city unionists who had earlier exhibited some degree of conservative exclusivity based on craft distinctions. Instead of acting individually St. John's labour now sensed the value of co-operative action. The visible support issued to NIWA strikers by key unions, such as the TPU and LSPU, enabled the Association to enter into the negotiations with Reid Newfoundland from a position unlike that of previous unions, for now they bargained with the strength of working-class unity.

This spirit of co-operation raises several critical questions as to the nature of class-conscious behaviour. The co-existence of transitional forms of capitalist development makes analysis of issues such as craft dilution and labour intensification problematic. St. John's shared similarities with other port cities in that there was a gradual shift away from the traditional waterfront crafts (such as sailmaking, ship rigging and caulking) with the development of a large surplus labour pool of "unskilled" and semi-skilled" dock workers brought on by an industry dominated by modern steel-hulled steamships.[51] In this environment, conservative-minded craft divisions were eventually supplanted by less structurally distinct groupings. During the Reid Newfoundland strike the active co-operation, not only between

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[51] Ian McKay, "Class struggle and Merchant Capital," in The Character of Class Struggle, ed. Bryan D. Palmer (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 17-36.

skilled and unskilled waterfront labour, but between these dockside workers and a whole range of city workers was evidence of a developing consensus to adopt a new strategy to counteract the integrated corporate empire of the "Reid octopus." The size and scope of the Reid operations necessitated the composition of a broader form of union organization, one which would cut across the boundaries of craft and levels of skill. Even waterfront unions with reputations for independence and insular behaviour recognized the importance in this nascent move towards industrial unionism.[52] A year prior to the Reid strike, the LSPU had placed on record their desire to foster a working-class solidarity when they passed a resolution to refrain from performing "any work which shall have the effect of hindering or interfering with the effort of the members of any union on strike."[53] While formally this declaration applied to LSPU members it also would have influenced casual waterfront labour as well for the longshoremen played a major role in the establishment of de facto working standards.[54] This support suggests a new cohesive sense of labour co-operation was developing in

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[52]Ibid.

[53]LSPU, Minutes, 3 April 1917, located at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University.

[54]Thomas K. Liddell, Industrial Survey of Newfoundland (St. John's: Robinson and Company Limited, 1940), 36-37.

St. John's during the war years. This solidarity was critically important in the NIWA's strike against Reid Newfoundland for now the Company found it could no longer rely on its characteristic use of strikebreakers as a tactic to divide and conquer its workers. These events and others relating to the dispute were carefully observed by city labour groups for the eventual outcome could establish a precedent for many pending confrontations between labour and capital in Newfoundland. Yet examples of class-conscious behaviour were not limited to the St. John's waterfront as other city workers joined forces to intensify the NIWA's strike action. A case in point is the city's street railway operations, owned and operated by Reid Newfoundland Company.

North American street railways share an extensive record of violent labour disputes during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[55] Privately controlled services were often the focus of intense public criticism

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[55]For scholarly accounts of several Canadian examples, see Robert H. Babcock, "The Saint John Street Railwaymen's Strike and Riot, 1914," Acadiensis, 11 (2) Spring 1982, 3-27; Bryan D. Palmer, "'Give us the road and we will run 't': The social and cultural matrix of an emerging labour movement," in G.S. Kealey and P. Warrian, eds., Essays in Canadian Working Class History (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 106-24; Bryan D. Palmer, A Culture in Conflict (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1979), 209-16; Peter D. Lambly, "Working Conditions and Industrial Relations on Canada's Street Railways, 1900-1920," unpublished M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1983, 104-51; Gregory S. Kealey, Toronto Workers Respond To Industrial Capitalism, 1867-1892 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 199-204.

for the exploitative manner in which they conducted their business enterprises. A reliable, affordable form of public transportation had come to be expected by most urban dwellers and increasingly citizens demanded that these services be placed under the control of municipal authorities.[56] Little praise was directed towards the corporate owners of the service utilities as these men were frequently vilified as aloof and indifferent to the needs of their customers. When disputes arose between management and their employees, public sentiment usually sided with the workers.[57] Time and again street railways would serve as the focus for intense confrontations between labour and capital. This pattern was to be repeated during the 1918 Reid Newfoundland strike. What is notable in St. John's was that this characteristic mood of public support for the striking workers was combined with a determination to avoid the scenes of violence which had often marred disputes elsewhere. Despite the Company's provocative strikebreaking tactics the picketers retained their cohesion. The strict self-discipline with

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[56]Craig Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class," Labour/Le Travail, 13 (Spring 1984), 45-75; Kealey, Toronto Workers, 204.

[57]Babcock, "The Saint John Street Railwaymen's Strike," 4-5; Palmer, "Give us the Road," 119-24; In Toronto, the 1886 street railway strikers attracted strong public support from a broad range of workers "from labourers to skilled craftsmen." See, Kealey, Toronto Workers, 204. The St. John's experience appears to have been similar.

which NIWA members conducted themselves won praise in the editorial columns of the local press.[58] To most citizens in St. John's the suspended street car service served as one of the most visible indicators that it was anything but "business as usual" for Reid Newfoundland. To counter this perception, the Company made a concerted attempt to place some of their trolleys on the line. The initial run was made on 9 April, using "car number 4", operated by "old hands" lured back to work from the ranks of the strikers and assisted by several men described as "returned soldiers."[59] This lone car started out along its downtown route along Water Street, "but few patrons were on it and it only went as far as the East End Fire Station then returned."[60] The Daily News reported that "the NIWA claim that so strongly is sympathy with them that the Company will not succeed in giving any kind of service."[61] This assertion was borne out by the small number of men initially willing to cross picket lines and operate the street cars -- all of whom soon reconsidered their actions and left work.[62]

Reid Newfoundland agents were also attempting to

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[58] Daily Star, 11 April 1918.

[59] Evening Herald, 9 April 1918.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Daily News, 11 April 1918.

[62] Evening Herald, 11 April 1918.

recruit strikebreakers from outlying areas of the city. Three such labourers brought in from the Goulds (just south of St. John's), when appraised of the situation, refused to continue work for the Company and returned their car to the railway barns. Later that same evening, they presented themselves to an NIWA meeting as prospective membership candidates.[63] This was not the only incident where Reid management sought to play rural labourers off against their urban counterparts. For President H.D. Reid considered an option to import men from the outport districts of Bay de Verde and Trinity Bay to replace the strikers. The use of such tactics had long been exercised by St. John's businessmen when faced with labour troubles as a method of arousing long-standing animosities between baymen and residents of the capital city.[64] The question of sectarian rivalry was also raised as the Goulds region was predominately Catholic in religion, while many NIWA members adhered to the Protestant faith.[65] Reports circulated that Reid Newfoundland

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[63] Ibid., 10 April 1918.

[64] Bill Gillespie, A Class Act: An Illustrated History of the Labour Movement in Newfoundland and Labrador (St. John's: Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, 1986), 59.

[65] In the electoral districts of St. John's West and St. John's East, the denominational breakdown placed Roman Catholics and Protestants at roughly equal proportions. Census of Newfoundland and Labrador 1911, vol.1, pp.xv, xvii-xix.

would be given "military protection" if they secured enough men to operate the street railway system.[66] Yet, throughout this tense period the strikers remained calm and avoided offering any excuse for such official intervention. No violence was reported at any time in this "the greatest strike ever seen in Newfoundland."[67]

The NIWA had good reason to be optimistic of their chances against Reid Newfoundland Company. A groundswell of support reinforced the strikers' mood of solidarity as groups and individuals came forward to lend their help. "Offers of assistance are coming in from most unexpected sources particularly from employees in industrial and manufacturing concerns. In one plant even girl workers have started a fund for the purpose."[68] This reference is to a strike fund established by munitions workers at the Newfoundland Shell Company in the city who "guaranteed" a contribution of not less than $200.00.[69] "Handsome subscriptions have been received at the [Consolidated] Foundry, Ropewalk, Sanitary Department [public works] and

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[66]Daily News, 17 April 1918.

[67]Evening Advocate, 15 June 1918.

[68]Ibid., 2 April 1918.

[69]Daily Star, 1 April 1918. The Newfoundland Shell Company was established in 1915 to manufacture war armaments. Reid Newfoundland Company was a major shareholder in this venture. PANL, GN 1/3/A, File 11, Prospectus for the Newfoundland Shell Company Limited, 23 November 1915.

other places where [NIWA] members work."[70] The Firemen's Union also contributed a significant amount (reported to be $400.00).[71] These funds were supplemented by those forwarded to the St. John's union executive by the Association's major branches in Grand Falls, Whitbourne, and Port-aux-Basques.[72] Strike support was not limited to contributions as workers jeopardized their jobs in spontaneous demonstrations of solidarity. A foreman in the St. John's Cold Storage plant, (a Reid operation) although not an NIWA member, "took his dismissal ... rather than go to work in the machine shop as a strike breaker."[73] When an electric motor burnt out at the Shell Factory, the management called in an electrician from Reid Newfoundland to make repairs, but once it was learned that he was not a member of the NIWA "all the operatives at the plant threw down their tools and refused to work while a non-union man and a strike breaker was present."[74] The Association claimed that "scab labour" would receive this response "in all other industrial and manufacturing concerns."[75] Even offers of doubled or tripled wages

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[70] Daily Star, 1 April 1918.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.,

[73] Evening Advocate, 2 April 1918.

[74] Evening Herald, 11 April 1918.

[75] Ibid.

failed to entice workers to cross picket lines.[76]

While public demonstrations of support for the strikers continued to grow, negotiations at the bargaining table between union and company executives reached a stalemate. Upon learning of Reid Newfoundland's internal circular, demanding allegiance from their railway employees, the NIWA broke off its discussions with the Company.[77] To counteract the Reid threats, the Association sent two of its members, Thomas C. Noel and Richard Kennedy, "out on the road to find out how the members working on the railway stood on the question" of a general strike action.[78] Having satisfied themselves of the solidarity along the line, union executives made final preparations to "tighten the screws" against the Company.[79] While planning this escalation of the strike the NIWA also sought to gain leverage through official channels. To this end, they solicited the support of their fellow city unionists to join in a delegation to call upon Governor Harris. The group which assembled at Government House represented an impressive collective of St. John's organized labour, and one which clearly demonstrated the depth of support for the NIWA. Included in the deputation

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[76]Evening Advocate, 2 April 1918.

[77]PANL, GN 2/5/344.

[78]Evening Advocate, 15 June 1918.

[79]Daily News, 5 April 1918.

were: Philip Bennett (NIWA President), James J. McGrath (LSPU President), William Linegar (Journeymen Cooper's President), Edward Doheney (International Boot and Shoeworker's Union President), Jonas Barter (Truckmen's Protective Union President), Robert Kearney (Firemen's Union Secretary).[80] These men carried messages of support from many other city unions including the bakers, plumbers, moulders, and shipwrights.[81] That evening a report of the meeting with Harris was presented to a packed gathering at the LSPU Hall. Reports placed attendance figures well in excess of 800.[82] Commenting on the meeting with the governor, the Daily Star noted that this type of broadly-based support signalled "a new era opening for labour here for the day was near when no Newfoundlander need leave the country to secure lucrative employment."[83] Rather than flee the colony in search of a living wage, workers could now stay and fight for their share of the national wealth.[84] This sense of impending victory was tempered by the knowledge that the influence

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[80] Evening Advocate, 15 June 1918.

[81] Daily Star, 5, 6 April 1918.

[82] Ibid., 6 April 1918.

[83] Ibid.

[84] For further analysis on Newfoundland migration, see Peter Neary, "Canadian Immigration Policy and the Newfoundlanders, 1912-1939," Acadiensis, 11, 2 (Spring 1982), 69-83.

of the Reid Newfoundland Company permeated every branch of the Island's political economy. The strike was far from decided, but unionists now spoke with increasing confidence. The bonds which were forged by this event had established what many earlier protests had failed to accomplish -- a base for the future cooperation between Newfoundland labour groups. Key support came from throughout the Island, and was not limited to the capital. This success must be considered as one of the NIWA's major contributions to the working-class of St. John's and Newfoundland.

The stagnant talks between the NIWA and Reid officials were cause for considerable distress to both Prime Minister Lloyd and Governor Harris. Lloyd wrote H.D. Reid several times to express his concern of an impending island-wide walkout. "From information received, I fear that it may well spread to the railways and perhaps the steamers ... this would be a serious blow to Newfoundland, which is daily in difficulties with regard to arranging for tonnage for our requirements."[85] The prime minister went on to "urge strongly" that the negotiations be renewed at once.[86] President Reid was phlegmatic in his reply and assured Lloyd that "from direct and positive

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[85]PANL, GN 8/3. W.F. Lloyd to H.D. Reid, 3 April 1918.

[86]Ibid.

information" the railway and steamers employees were not in sympathy with the strike and that there was "no reason to fear any interruption of the transportation service."[87] This stance must have seemed contradictory to the prime minister for only a month earlier Reid had written to say that there was indeed a real threat of a "general strike" of the company's operations.[88] In the first instance it appears that Reid was attempting to play up the prospect of a transportation strike in order to gain leverage for his request for increased steamship subsidies and railway passenger rates.[89] But now that the threat of a total shutdown of the company's transportation system was a reality, the president sought to limit further government intervention which could force his hand in the negotiations. The Association's support amongst railway and steamship employees was both well organized and solid, for the NIWA had carefully measured its strength both before and during the dispute.[90]

Reid Newfoundland found itself in a vulnerable

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[87] Ibid., H.D. Reid to W.F. Lloyd.

[88] PANL, GN 2/5/344, H.D. Reid to W.F. Lloyd, 6 March 1918.

[89] In June 1918, Reid Newfoundland Company was granted a revised rate schedule with increases ranging between 20-40 per cent, see Daily News, 4 June 1918; Daily Star, 2 September 1918.

[90] Daily Star, 9 February 1918; Evening Advocate, 15 June 1918.

position with pressures directed at the corporation from every angle. Privately, both Lloyd and Governor Harris were pushing for a resumption of the negotiations, while public opinion became increasingly vociferous in calling for a settlement to the strike which threatened to isolate the Island from regular commerce.[91] The Company must have also been dismayed at the weak support offered to them by their Water Street business colleagues "as evidenced by their silence."[92] The lack of any public statement was interpreted by many as a tacit denouncement of the Company's actions in this matter. In addition, the threatened loss of revenue Reid Newfoundland would suffer as the result of a protracted strike could seriously imperil future plans to expand and diversify the corporate holdings.[93] The dramatic increase in passenger and freight load due to the war proved to be a bonanza for the Company's profit margins and they could ill afford to lose

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[91] Daily News, 11 April 1918. Calls were made to invoke the "War Measures Act" for the "good of the public interest." The "Emergency War Measures Act" was passed in 1914.

[92] Evening Advocate, 6 April 1918.

[93] Reid Newfoundland Company was exploring the feasibility of a number of business ventures including a cold storage plant for fish processing, expanded mining operations at its Coal Brook Mines, and a hydroelectric/paper mill development on the Humber River. See. J.K. Hiller, "Newsprint Politics: The Newfoundland Pulp and Paper Industry, 1915-1939," (unpublished research paper, Memorial University, 1986); J.K. Hiller, "The Newfoundland Railway, 1881-1949," Newfoundland Historical Society, Pamphlet No. 6, 1981.

any of this money.[94] Clearly Reid Newfoundland stood to lose more from the strike than from a prompt settlement of the wage demands. Faced with this choice, Reid officials opted for an agreement which would limit their probable future expenditures. The government had decided to call in several cabinet ministers to help direct negotiations. Included in this group were Sir Michael P. Cashin (Minister of Finance and Customs), William F. Coaker (F.P.U. President and Minister without Portfolio), and Sir John C. Crosbie (Minister of Shipping).[95] Although none of these men could be considered sympathetic to the NIWA, it is a measure of the Association's determination to launch a general strike that the government felt sufficiently pressured to form such a committee.[96] After several days of bargaining, in which the parties met several times per day, a formula to resolve the dispute was agreed upon by all. The formal papers were signed on Friday, 12 April and news of the outcome reached the public on the follow-

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[94]Governor Davidson in his "House of Reid" report commented that, "If the Railway would ever pay, it should have made a conspicuous profit in the last two or three years when owing to the rise in sea freight, the Railway has had goods presented for transit in excess of its capacity and the Company has at the same time made a great advance in the schedule of freight charges."

[95]W.F. Coaker's response to St. John's unionists had long been caustic, as evidenced in his earlier reactions to similar strikes. See, Evening Advocate, 22 April 1910, for Coaker's editorial on the longshoreman's strike.

[96]PANL, GN 8/3. Alexander Harris to W.F. Lloyd, 3 April 1918.

ing day.[97] The NIWA and Reid Newfoundland had both decided to keep the terms of agreement out of the press and details of the matter did not fully emerge until early June.[98] Later it was revealed that a clause in the agreement stipulated that all of the issues in dispute were to be adjusted by 15 May, and that all wage settlements were retroactive to 15 April (the day the strikers returned to work).[99] The threat of an Island-wide strike had been averted by this two-stage agreement which set in motion a binding set of negotiations.

A description of the terms of the agreement was published in June in The Industrial Worker and later reprinted in other city papers. This detailed report listed the numerous points which were finally resolved.

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[97] Daily Star, 13 April 1918; Evening Advocate, 15 June 1918, col.3, clause 1a.

[98] Commentary on the settlement was muted in the daily press with bland support offered for the tentative agreement worked out between the strikers and management. This could be attributed to the strict press censorship invoked under the War Measures Act. The use of such powers were exercised to suspend anti-government newspapers such as the Daily Star, Daily News, and the weekly Plaindealer. See, PANL, GN 1/3/A, Governor's Correspondence, Files 473, 648; CO 194/295, Governor Harris to W.H. Long, 27 April 1918. Evidence suggesting that Reid Newfoundland had in fact restricted newspaper reports dealing with the strike was provided in correspondence between H.D. Reid and his Montreal solicitor H.J. Elliott. Reid requested that a St. John's-based correspondent for the Montreal Star who submitted matter "not suitable to the best interest of this Company" be removed. See, PANL P/7/B/19, RNCP, Correspondence, Box 7 (1915-1918).

[99] Evening Advocate, 15 June 1918, col.3, clause 1e.

Central to this pact was the Reid Company's recognition of the NIWA as the formal representative of the workers, and more generally the acknowledgement of the "great principle that the employees are entitled to be heard in all matters connected with their welfare."[100] This principle was to take the practical form of a standing committee to mediate between labour and management. The committee was to consist of workers "from every department of the Company represented by those who were on strike."[101] Association president Philip Bennett was to chair the workers' committee, and in turn, they would meet with Company president H.D. Reid and his managers on all issues concerning the two groups. Whether the formation of this standing committee was of practical value to the workers is unclear. But such a move was innovative in a society where in the absence of any government ministry with a specific mandate for labour relations, most labourers were left with no recourse for the settlement of disputes through an apparatus of formal negotiation.[102] While the contract provided for greater workplace security it did

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[100] Ibid., col.3.

[101] Ibid., col.3, clause 1b.

[102] Newfoundland did not formerly possess a Department of Labour until 1949, although temporary measures were adopted in 1933 before the Commission of Government came into power. Until the Canadian Labour Relations Act was adopted in 1950 contracts between employers and unions were not legally binding. Rather, they were dependent on a union's collective strength.

not bind the Reid employees to long-term conditions as the contract was subject to annual renewal. In addition, Reid Newfoundland did not specify a set of extra conditions or riders which would remain the Company's prerogative. This settlement largely avoided the legalistic and bureaucratic entanglements of later labour-management relations.

Following the settlement, H.D. Reid wrote his Montreal solicitor, Henry J. Elliott, to ask his advice on arrangements made between Reid Newfoundland and the NIWA.[103] Elliott thought the outcome was a "satisfactory arrangement," but he went on to suggest that the Company adopt a form of industrial council similar to one used by the Standard Oil Company.[104] This would involve the use of elected employee representatives who would join with company officials on a committee to advise on workplace conditions. Elliott also recommended the expenditure of money "in the laying out of tenements and the improvements in the living conditions of the men."[105] Despite this recommendation for an American type industrial council, the Reid Newfoundland-NIWA settlement appears to have more

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[103] PANL, P7/B/19, RNCP, Correspondence Box 7 (1915-1918). Correspondence between H.D. Reid and H.J. Elliott, 16, 25 April 1918.

[104] Clearly, Elliott had in mind an industrial council modeled after the American type of Rockefeller-King arrangement. See, Bruce Scott, "A Place in the Sun: The Industrial Council at Massey-Harris, 1919-1929," Labour/Le Travailleur 1 (1976), 158-62.

[105] PANL, P7/B/19, RNCP, Elliott to Reid 25 April 1918.

in common with the British Whitley Council approach. The Company recognized the existing union, retaining its shop craft committee method of representation, instead of bypassing the NIWA altogether.[106] The Association considered the concept of mutual co-operation an important aspect in labour-capital relationship as they published a series of articles on this subject in The Industrial Worker.[107] Whitley Councils were not formally instituted after World War I, as Thomas Liddell was to recommend such a proposal again during his survey of Newfoundland in the late 1930s.[108]

The Association also secured a list of important concessions from the Reid Newfoundland management. A key issue centred on overtime hours and the new contract now determined that these periods were to be calculated automatically after the regular day, regardless of when an employee arrived at work.[109] The classification issue was also settled with a five level system based on skill

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[106]Scott, "A Place in the Sun," 159-60.

[107]The series author was the Hon. John Harvey (1865-1920), a prominent local businessman, member of the Newfoundland Legislative Council (1905-1920), and an executive member of the Newfoundland Board of Trade. Harvey's collected articles were re-printed in, The Framework of Industrial Society (St. John's: Union Publishing, 1919).

[108]Thomas K. Liddell, Industrial Survey of Newfoundland (St. John's: Robinson and Company, 1940), 127.

[109]Evening Advocate, 15 June 1918, col.4.

qualifications and job seniority. Equitable procedures for grievances and dismissals were implemented, ones which clearly outlined the grievance process and listed the infractions which would result in a dismissal. Also included was a clarification of employee privileges, which entailed access to heating coal sold at cost and railway passes for workers and their families. On the matter of wages, the Association reported that "with very few exceptions substantial increases were given."[110] Finally, Reid Newfoundland promised not to retaliate against any of their employees who were involved in the strike, if the NIWA would reciprocate and not ostracise workers who remained on the job. Since almost all of the Reid employees had joined in the walkout, this point did not appear to greatly trouble the Association.[111]

An analysis of the strike leads one to conclude that the final resolution was a considerable victory for the workers at Reid Newfoundland. Association members had sustained an effective strike action for three weeks and won some major concessions from an employer with considerable notoriety for intransigence in union matters. The NIWA executive claimed that they were well satisfied with the outcome of the talks, and in later comments, many rank-and-file members expressed a similar positive view.

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[110] Ibid., col.5.

[111] Evening Telegram, 27 March 1918.

One member remarked that:

> The NIWA will stand out in history as will the name of its President, Phillip Bennett. For the manner in which he and his fellow workers or the Executive and other Committees conducted the strike was masterly. Especially in view of the fact that everywhere, both in the city and the outports, the general opinion was that the Association was bound to fail.[112]

The NIWA had indeed accomplished much for working class Newfoundlanders for they had taken on the colony's largest single employer and in so doing established an important precedent for future disputes. As one union activist later recalled, "The railway was always accepted as a yardstick in money and rates at that time and everybody said, we'll just follow the railway."[113] Wartime privations had served to place the lives of labourers in sharp contrast to those of the Water Street business interests. The disastrous impact of runaway cost-of-living, coupled with a long-held animosity towards the Reid Newfoundland Company had coalesced around this strike action. Considered in the context of the time, the Reid strike had brought together both organized and unorganized labour as few events had in the past. In this regard these strikes demonstrated an appetite for collective action which can be added to a lineage of class-conscious

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[112] Evening Advocate, 1 June 1918.

[113] Interview with Walter Sparks by R. Hattenhauer, 10 May 1967, MUNFLA, tape C-7228.

behaviour stemming from nineteenth-century examples of plebeian protest in the fishing industry.[114] The co-ordination exhibited by the Reid strikers was impressive and the dispute appears to have remained remarkably non-violent. Workers presented strong evidence of solidarity, not only amongst industrial labour in St. John's, but throughout the Island. Reports from NIWA branches situated on the Newfoundland Railway rallied to the slogan "All solid along the line." This solidarity influenced many citizens not directly involved in the dispute. The editorial pages of the city's daily press were filled with comments from individuals who were deeply moved by the strikers' sense of purpose. A letter signed "Outport man," who witnessed an NIWA meeting professed to be "most profoundly impressed" by the actions of the Association. "The earnestness of the men on strike and their loyalty to the cause is what moved me most."[115] The Reid Newfoundland strike was one major step among many to be made

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[114] On nineteenth century working-class protests, see Linda Little, "Plebeian Collective Action in Harbour Grace and Carbonear, Newfoundland 1830-1840" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial University, 1984).

[115] Daily Star, 11 April 1918; Many St. John's workers emphasized the "great exhuberance and tremendous enthusiasm" the NIWA engendered. See, interview with Frank and Irving Fogwill, by R. Hattenhauer, 18 May 1967, MUNFLA, tape C-7229. Following this theme, Historian James Cronin notes that "working-class sentiment" in the latter war years was that of a group which was "optimistic and quite confident of their own potential." See, James E. Cronin, Labour and Society in Britain, 1918-1979 (London: Batsford Academic, 1984), 29-30.

in the struggle to win a fair share of benefits reaped by capitalist enterprises in wartime Newfoundland. To introduce change, these working people came together to form a movement which, in displaying the commonality of the working-class experience, articulated a vision of a society which stood in opposition to that of the merchants, industrialists, and bankers. The NIWA was an expression of "otherness" and one which had again shown Newfoundlanders the power to be exercised through collective action.

Chapter Six

"Flags of Defiance": The NIWA Broadens Its Mandate

I

With the settlement of the major strike against the Reid Newfoundland Company in late spring 1918, the St. John's NIWA directed its attentions to the Association's members residing outside the capital city. While St. John's unionists had secured several important victories against the Water Street business/political axis, other workers across the Island had fared less well.[1] Among the most vociferous of these groups were the longshoremen and railway freight handlers serving the western terminus of the Newfoundland Railway at Port-aux-Basques. Workers there serviced the ferry operations linking Newfoundland to the Canadian railway system which provided the major portion of the Island's passenger and freight traffic.[2] As with other working men and women in Newfoundland, wartime inflation had stripped away significant portions of their earning power leaving them unable to provide for the welfare of their families. Protests to their employ-

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[1]For example see, "A Reid Agent's Case," letter to the editor, Daily Star (St. John's), 12 August 1918. In this lengthy statement, an unidentified railway agent complained that he and his fellow workers had not shared in the pay increases recently negotiated by the St. John's NIWA.

[2]Alfred R. Penney, "The Newfoundland Railway: Newfoundland Epic," in The Book of Newfoundland, Vol. 3, ed. J.R. Smallwood, (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937), 473-502.

er, Reid Newfoundland, had gone unheeded until these workers allied themselves with the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association in January 1918.[3] Now six months later, the mood amongst these Port-aux-Basques employees was one of growing militancy. For not only had their wages failed to keep pace with the cost-of-living, the pay offered was considerably less than what was earned by their counterparts in Nova Scotia. Reid Newfoundland's wage schedules provided only 55 per cent of the scale set in North Sydney for workers performing similar tasks.[4] Longshore labourers on Bell Island, and in St. John's also received higher pay. As the NIWA membership at Port-aux-Basques developed, both in numbers and activism, calls for strike action became more frequent, eventually leading to the Association's second major strike against Reid Newfoundland in the late summer.

The issues surrounding the dispute involved wage parity for the Port-aux-Basques workers, overtime rates, and job classifications. In early June Reid Newfoundland, responding to the NIWA's request for wage hikes, had offered an increase which moved rates from 19 cents to 22

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[3]Daily Star, 19, 26 January 1918. In January the St. John's NIWA claimed that it had attracted approximately 60 members at Port-aux-Basques.

[4]The wages at North Sydney, Nova Scotia offered to longshoremen were 32 cents per hour for day work, and 36 cents for night work. See, W. Smith, letter to the editor Daily Star, 2 September 1918.

cents per hour, for the standard ten-hour day, and from 22 cents to 25 cents for overtime.[5] The NIWA accepted this as a temporary measure, but renewed its demands for wage parity with other dockside freight handlers who were receiving wages of 30 cents day and 40 cents night. The Company refused further concessions claiming that the Port-aux-Basques operation was less efficient than either North Sydney or St. John's. What lay behind this statement was Reid Newfoundland's denial that its employees at the western railhead should be considered longshoremen, and thus entitled to a pay scale commensurate with this job description.[6] This issue of job classifications would prove to be a major stumbling block between the two sides throughout the dispute. Again, the NIWA applied pressure on the Company to bring its wage scales into line with similar ferry/railroad operations, but with little result. Negotiations reached an impasse by late July and Reid Newfoundland's general superintendent J.P. Powell wrote Company president H.D. Reid informing him that a walkout was imminent.[7] The NIWA were in fact making preparations to shut down all freight transfers from Port-aux-Basques to St. John's as Association president Phillip Bennett had

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[5]PANL, RNCP, Box 8, Correspondence (1917-1918). Letter from Reid General Superintendent J.P. Powell to President H.D. Reid, 31 July 1918.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid.

travelled across the Island personally to discuss matters with union officials there.[8] The situation left both the government and Reid officials nervous as a tie-up of the railway service would seriously hamper the delivery of necessary freight and foodstuffs to St. John's. Earlier in the war, Water Street merchants had liquidated most of the colony's shipping fleet thereby placing enormous pressures on the overburdened Newfoundland Railway. Due to these circumstances, St. John's-bound freight was already snarled at North Sydney awaiting transfer across the Cabot Strait.[9] The prospect of a protracted strike which would only serve to aggravate this difficult situation must have given the NIWA considerable leverage in their bargaining talks. After the Association's spring campaign, neither Water Street businessmen nor government officials could dismiss the determination of these workers to follow through with their demands.

With Reid Newfoundland refusing to compromise on their wage offer, the NIWA executive committee ordered their Port-aux-Basques members off the job on 7 August.[10] The men were anxious to launch the strike and some had unofficially begun a work slowdown several days earlier.

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[8] Daily Star, 3 August 1918.

[9] Newfoundland Board of Trade, Annual Report, 1918, 21-22.

[10] Daily News (St. John's), 10 August 1918.

Participating in the strike were 60 longshoremen and freight handlers as well as Reid Company "boiler men and car repairers."[11] These latter workers struck in sympathy with their fellow workers. Phillip Bennett and the St. John's NIWA wired a note of support stating that the Association would "guarantee to raise the sum of $500 per week until the strike ends."[12] In addition the St. John's branch would push for future meetings with Reid Newfoundland officials in an attempt to reach a settlement. Soon after the strike began the Company made its first serious proposal. The offer would raise the wage schedule 8 cents per hour (to 33 cents) for night work only, as the day wage remained at 22 cents.[13] Reid officials claimed that this rate would pay the Port-aux-Basques workers "on the same basis as labourers who worked around the freight shed at St. John's."[14] As this offer failed to address the issue of longshore job classifications, the NIWA "flatly" refused the deal. Typically Reid officials were attempting to recruit strikebreakers for their freight operations while this proposal was being tendered, but

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[11] Evening Telegram (St. John's), 10 August 1918. The total number of Reid Newfoundland employees on strike at Port-aux-Basques was estimated at between 70-100.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 13 August 1918.

[14] Evening Advocate (St. John's), 13 August 1918.

reports noted "they are difficult to procure."[15] This proved to be the case as no east-bound freight left Port-aux-Basques in the first two weeks of the dispute. On 16 August, a St. John's newspaper report commented that "Not a bit of freight has been handled at Port-aux-Basques for the past 10 or 12 days."[16] By this time public pressure was mounting to force the government to intervene to end the dispute and to restore the supply of freight to the capital.[17] As the stalemate continued editorials appeared warning both sides "not to trespass on the public's good will" as the strike was threatening the "whole country."[18]

The ongoing dispute also threatened to drain the NIWA's finances as their substantial commitment to the Port-aux-Basques members became burdensome. Bennett called a further meeting with H.D. Reid on 17 August and this resulted in a compromise package being offered to the strikers.[19] The offer was again turned down by the Port-aux-Basques members determined to hold out for their demands of 35 cents and 40 cents hourly for day and night work respectively. At this point the St. John's NIWA issued a call for the government to establish a board of

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., 16 August 1918.

[17] Evening Telegram, 17 August 1918.

[18] Ibid., 23 August 1918.

[19] Evening Advocate, 17 August 1918.

arbitration, but no action was forthcoming. Newspaper editorials decried the government's refusal claiming that they had joined with Reid Newfoundland to wait out the strike until the union's resolve was broken.[20] This claim had some truth in it as a central figure in the cabinet was an old adversary of the NIWA -- the Minister of Shipping John Crosbie. Crosbie's well-known antagonism towards the union movement had been amply demonstrated both in his current portfolio and in his past actions as a Water Street merchant.[21] Countering these forces was a public opinion largely sympathetic to the NIWA and to the strikers at Port-aux-Basques. The Daily News wrote of the strikers that "Their demands do not appear to us to be so extravagant under existing conditions as to exclude them from a fair and reasonable compromise."[22] Still neither the government or Reid Newfoundland appeared ready to make a reasonable compromise. It was now September and no

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[20]Daily News, 22 August 1918.

[21]John C. Crosbie (1876-1932) was a prominent St. John's shipowner and president of the Newfoundland Produce Company. Crosbie had a history of bitter disputes in his dealings with city labour groups, notably the LSPU. The Newfoundland Produce Company was the target of several major strikes in 1907 and 1911. See, Jessie Chisholm, "'Hang Her Down': Strikes in St. John's, 1890-1914," unpublished research paper, Department of History, Memorial University, 1987, 41. Crosbie was also involved in a serious conflict of interest scandal in 1918 related to business deals he undertook while serving as Minister of Shipping.

[22]Daily News, 22 August 1918.

freight was reaching St. John's on the Newfoundland Railway as goods for importation continued to pile up at North Sydney. Finally after receiving considerable criticism for his handling of the situation John Crosbie offered to form a three person board of arbitration. It was to consist of one member each from the NIWA and Reid Company, with the third member to be the Minister of Shipping himself.[23] This offer was immediately declined and city newspapers commented on the obvious bias in the proposed board. "In view of the Minister's close connection with the Reid Newfoundland Company, the public will sympathize with the decision of the NIWA."[24] Other comments were directed at the government's preoccupation with the "spoils of office" rather than the welfare of the colony.[25]

Fearing that the rejection of the government's arbitration proposal would turn public opinion against them the NIWA decided to appeal the case directly in the daily press. For this task the Association chose their best writer, Warwick Smith. In a lengthy and passionate article in the Daily Star, Smith presented the striker's

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[23]The government could propose such an ad hoc arbitration board because no formal apparatus existed to resolve such labour conflicts. Newfoundland did not have an effectively functioning Department of Labour until 1949.

[24]Daily News, 30 August 1918.

[25]Evening Advocate, 30 August 1918.

case. Claiming that a conspiracy existed between Water Street businessmen and the government, Smith denounced the Board of Trade's silence in the dispute. To this, Smith warned that St. John's unionists were considering escalating the protest: "Let the commercial magnates take heed. There is already talk of a general strike throughout the city, because men feel that Water Street has thrown in its lot with our local czar."[26] This mood of confrontation was a continuation of the anger that had surfaced throughout the last year of the war. Smith noted that the Association had taken leadership of this movement and directed this energy into disciplined job actions. But time was running out for the union's Executive Council as rank-and-file members became increasingly impatient. "A prominent clergyman declared that but for the NIWA there would have been serious rioting last winter."[27] Redirecting the powerful wartime rhetoric of patriotism back towards the business and political community, Smith contrasted the avarice of the elite to the privations suffered by common citizens. Added to this scenario was the threat of further troubles as the war wound down and soldiers serving overseas started returning to the Island. The NIWA claimed that both Reid Newfoundland and the government were anticipating an armistice to benefit their

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[26] Daily Star, 2 September 1918.

[27] Ibid.

present labour shortage. Warwick Smith warned that:

> No true lover of his country would welcome the day that would see a victorious army suddenly disbanded and its members used to cause a slump in the labour market. This is the means that the great financiers will try to use in order to bring the workingman again under their heel.[28]

He went on to state that this need not occur if public opinion and labour could unite to prevent veterans from taking the places of striking unionists. Anticipating this problem the NIWA had earlier formed a working relationship with the St. John's-based Great War Veteran's Association (GWVA) to help returned servicemen find suitable employment in the city.[29] In the GWVA, the NIWA found an organization which supported many of the Association's goals. To help the veterans establish themselves the NIWA offered unlimited use of their offices and

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[28] Ibid., Smith expanded on his statements in another article entitled, "Demobilization and Labour," Daily News, 19 November 1918. In this piece Smith again demanded the government to take responsibility for demobilized soldiers so that "the labour market would not become overstocked."

[29] The NIWA established a close working relationship with the GWVA during latter months of the war. Originally known as "The Returned Soldiers and Sailors and Rejected Men's Association," this group was formed in spring 1918 by Sergeant Harold Mitchell. Initially the Association was lead by enlisted soldiers and non-commissioned officers, such as Mitchell, but in 1919 the group was reorganized and taken over by staff officers and came under the aegis of the Colonial Governor. The GWVA formed a Relief Committee concerned with lobbying the government for veteran's benefits and a Civil Re-Establishment Committee. See, The Book of Newfoundland, Vol.1, 448-51; Materials relating to the GWVA are located in, PANL, P6/A/14, 21.

meeting rooms to the GWVA. The two groups continued to work together closely in the period immediately following the Armistice.[30] But the threat of veterans usurping union jobs did not address the immediate concerns of a strike settlement, and to that end the NIWA sought to place additional pressure on the government.

Thought was given to expanding the walkout by ordering marine firemen and stokers who were members of the Firemen's Protective Union (an NIWA affiliate) to boycott vessels travelling to Port-aux-Basques.[31] Plans relating to a railway strike in St. John's were also discussed. To co-ordinate the strikers on the scene Phillip Bennett, and Port-aux-Basques branch representative Albert Bennett, set out for the west coast.[32] The two men planned to pick up further Association delegates in Grand Falls as well. With the threat of a general strike in the background, and still no freight deliveries

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[30]For a statement of the veteran's mandate see, "What the GWVA Stands For," Daily Star, 4 October 1919; Although Newfoundland veterans shared many of the postwar concerns of their Canadian counterparts (such as: Pensions, disabled relief, an abhorance of prohibition; and a developing nativism) the Newfoundland GWVA, in its initial form, appears to have been more politically partisan than the Canadian organization. For comparison see, Desmond Morton and Glenn Wright Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans Return to Civilian Life 1915-1930 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 70-72, 118-22.

[31]Daily Star, 2 September 1918.

[32]Albert Bennett had been in St. John's, taking part in the negotiations, since the strike was called.

by rail to the capital city for almost one month, the government quickly decided that a settlement was unlikely to be reached in the "natural manner" and again offered to aid in negotiations.[33] Prior to this break both sides in the dispute had shifted closer together in their wage offers.[34] Secret talks between the NIWA and Reid Newfoundland continued for several days until suddenly an agreement was reached on 5 September. Following the practice established in the spring negotiations, neither side would reveal the details of the settlement. City newspapers, quoting the NIWA's Industrial Worker, claimed the Association was satisfied with the deal.[35] Unfortunately the details of the settlement appear to have proved as ephemeral as copies of the Industrial Worker. What is known of the issue was that Reid Newfoundland had managed to secure a 20 per cent increase in its passenger and freight rates from the government in September. These went into effect on 5 October. Once again it appears that Reid officials had insulated their profit margin from payroll increases by raising their railway traffic reven-

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[33]Daily News, 4 September 1918.

[34]The NIWA lowered their demands from 30 cents per hour (day)/40 cents per hour (night) to 25 cents per hour/35 cents per hour respectively. See, Evening Telegram, 2 September 1918. Reid Newfoundland's best offer remained secret.

[35]Evening Telegram, 7 September 1918.

ues.[36] Public condemnation was swift as the St. John's dailies carried editorials bitterly denouncing this move.[37] The Daily Star complained "the present government has agreed to pay the Reid Newfoundland Company ... hundreds of thousands of dollars for the performance of contractual obligations for which they already have been liberally paid."[38] For the NIWA this experience was another example of how tenacious the "Reid octopus" could prove in a battle.

Yet the Port-aux-Basques strike had been a successful venture in many ways for the Association. The NIWA demonstrated that it could wage a protracted strike outside its urban power base, and that the Association's Executive Council could co-ordinate strike activities of its member branches. The solidarity of the Port-aux-Basques strikers served as impressive testimony to the determination of Newfoundland labour to struggle for the right to a respectable standard of living and to participate in resolving workplace conflicts. This strike was the first of a series leading into the fall and winter of 1918 and carrying into 1919 as other groups encouraged

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[36]Reid Newfoundland Company had secured a 20 per cent increase in its freight and passenger rates in June 1918. See, Daily News, 4 June 1918.

[37]Evening Telegram, 4, 5 September 1918.

[38]Daily Star, 15 August 1918. Anticipating another round of railway rate increases the Daily Star criticised the government's acquiescence throughout this period.

by the NIWA's example pushed for their rights to share in Newfoundland's era of prosperity.[39] Active union organization began to spread to groups which had gone without an effective voice before the war. One of the most significant developments in this growth in unionism was the extension of the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association into the ranks of the working women of St. John's.

II

During the last year of the war another major development in the city's union movement started to gain momentum. This concerns the story of the working women of St. John's. Like their counterparts elsewhere, women throughout the city faced a series of structural barriers specific to their gender which hindered collective action.

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[39] On 2 June 1919, NIWA member blacksmiths and boilermakers employed at the Reid Newfoundland Company's dry docks walked off the job when the Company refused to negotiate with the craftsworkers over a list of shop-floor issues including, job classifications, wage increases, and overtime rates. In an attempt to prevent its striking employees from working outside St. John's, Reid Newfoundland issued a blacklist to all major employers requesting that none of the strikers be offered work. The dispute continued to the end of July at which time the two parties agreed to submit thier case to an arbitration board consisting of one representative from the union, company, and government. The arbitration report, released on 27 November 1919, generally supported the NIWA demands on overtime rates, job classifications, and retroactive pay for strikers, but an overall wage increase was denied, as was a closed shop. For details on the strikes see, PANL, RNCP, Boxes 2, 9, Correspondence 1919-1920.

Notable amongst these hurdles were problems associated with attempting to organize a labour force in which the overwhelming majority of workers consisted of young, single women most of whom entered the workplace as one phase in their "life-cycle" before leaving it again to take up the responsibilities of married life. Historian Joan Sangster comments that "the great fluidity of female labour obviously militated against successful unionization."[40] This was especially true of St. John's, as Nancy Forestell notes: "the city's working women tended to be even younger than their counterparts in Canadian urban centres."[41] If this was a North American pattern, then the majority must have been well under twenty-five years of age.[42] Because most women were engaged in ~~paid~~ labour for only a limited timespan, few of them developed the extensive knowledge of the workplace or the self-confidence and expertise necessary for collective organization. Sangster, Ruth Frager and others, agree that many working women did view marriage not only as a natural and expected progression through their lives, but also as a

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[40]Joan Sangster, "The 1907 Bell Telephone Strike: Organizing Women Workers," Labour/Le Travailleur, 3 (1978), 128.

[41]Nancy Forestell, "Working Women in St. John's, 1920-1940," M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, forthcoming 1987, 73-118.

[42]Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 153.

means of escape from the unrelenting drudgery and super-exploitation of the workplace. As Frager states, "for most, marriage marked their exit from the world of paid labour."[43]

Other structural difficulties facing working women included workplace isolation. In St. John's this isolation came in several forms, one of which was employment in private households as domestic servants (the city's largest occupation for women involving over 30 per cent of the female labour force), or work in a number of small retail stores as sales clerks. Both jobs entailed long, irregular hours under the close scrutiny of employers who would not hesitate to dismiss their help if they showed signs of associating with union representatives.[44] The insularity of a small city like St. John's made it

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[43]Ruth Frager, "No Proper Deal: Women Workers and the Canadian Labour Movement, 1870-1940," in Linda Briskin and Lynda Yanz, eds. Union Sisters: Women in the Labour Movement (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1983), 45. In some North American workplaces women did return to work after marriage, often leaving it again when economic conditions allowed for this. This appears not to have been the experience in St. John's as few married women remained at their jobs after marriage. For Newfoundland, see, Forestell, "Working Women," 50-75; For the United States, see, Susan Levine, Labor's True Women: Carpet Weavers, Industrialization and Labor Reform in the Gilded Age (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 6; Tamara K. Hareven and Randolph Langenbach, Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory-City (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

[44]Wayne Roberts, Honest Womanhood: Feminism, Femininity, and Class Consciousness Among Toronto Working Women, 1893 to 1914 (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1976), 14.

problematic to keep such activities discrete and therefore increased the vulnerability of these working women, many of whom were inexperienced outport girls brought into the city specifically to work in these menial occupations.[45] Women involved in industrial jobs were usually restricted to gender-based "occupational ghettoes" which often reduced their opportunity for union organization. The garment industry was particularly subject to job fragmentation as subcontracting, piecework, and outwork separated workers from one another leaving them exposed to exploitive middle-men.[46] Only in the largest Water Street department stores, or in the city's clothing and allied food industries, were female workers concentrated in the numbers necessary to develop a consensus on shop-floor issues. Even then, working women were excluded from the city's traditional craft unions, limiting possible connections with international organizations.[47] Other

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[45]Nancy Forestell, "Working Women," 73-118. In St. John's, almost all outport girls worked as domestic servants while city-born girls usually found positions as sales clerks.

[46]Roberts, Honest Womanhood, 10.

[47]Stronger connections with international unions could have proved beneficial to St. John's working women, but these would likely have been AFL-TLC unions with their often ambivalent attitudes towards organizing women. In the end, Newfoundland may have gained more by remaining independent of North American unionism. For a discussion on the AFL attitude towards working women see, Levine Labor's True Women, 150; and Alice Kessler-Harris, "Where are the Organized Women Workers?" Feminist Studies, 3 (1/2) Fall 1975, 97.

occupations lacked the collective background of class struggle due to their relatively recent formation, or because recent expansions had just opened them to women. For example, "clerical and sales employees suffered from an absence of almost any organizational tradition whatsoever."[48] In Newfoundland working women did have a record of activity in local labour groups and participation in strike actions led by established male unions, but figures show that female membership in unions remained limited. Despite these structural imbalances, working women in St. John's sought to overcome these problems, and by the late summer of 1918 they had joined forces with the NIWA to form their own distinct organization.

On the evening of 8 August 1918, scores of working women met at the British Hall to establish what became known as the NIWA Ladies' Branch. Amongst this group were factory workers from most of the city's manufacturing plants, as well as a "representative from the domestic employees."[49] In the chair that night was Julia Salter

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[48]Veronica Strong-Boag, "The Girl of the New Day: Canadian Working Women in the 1920s," Labour/Le Travailleur, 4 (1979), 154. There is some evidence, however, that in St. John's a union of retail sales clerks allowed women to join in 1863. See, Bill Gillespie, A Class Act: An Illustrated History of the Labour Movement in Newfoundland and Labrador (St. John's: Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, 1986), 20.

[49]Evening Telegram, 9 August 1918. Working women representing the following companies were present: Newfoundland Clothing, British Clothing, Newfoundland Knitting, Standard Manufacturing, Colonial Cordage,

Earle, who would assume the presidency of this organization. Salter Earle had earlier made a name for herself by championing the cause of industrial unionism in St. John's.[50] Elected as the union's vice-president was Miss Josephine Morrissey, a tailoress at the Royal stores. Several other executive positions were filled by women employed in city factories.[51] This was a reflection of the rank-and-file membership, as most were local factory workers. Also in attendance was a delegation from the principal Association, consisting of NIWA president Phillip Bennett, and executive members Warwick Smith and Thomas M. White. These men were present to extend the encouragement of the city's male unionists, and as well to lend some organizational expertise to the proceedings.

Imperial Tobacco, Browning's (bakery and biscuits), and F.B. Wood Company (confectionery). Soon after the Ladies' Branch was formed, women working at the Parker and Monroe shoe factory joined the NIWA.

[50]Julia Salter Earle (1877-1945) born in St. John's was the daughter of William Thomas Hall Salter and Elizabeth Brown (Chancey) Salter. She married Arthur Edward Earle, a jeweller, in 1903. Salter Earle worked for 35 years as an engrossing clerk in the House of Assembly. Before becoming the first president of the NIWA Ladies' Branch, she was secretary of the Women's Association of the Cochrane Street Methodist Church. Later Salter Earle ran as a Labour candidate in the St. John's municipal election of 1925, and narrowly missed becoming the first woman elected to public office in Newfoundland. See, Who's Who In and From Newfoundland (St. John's: R. Hibbs, 1927), 165.

[51]Other members of the first executive were: Miss Beulah Bishop, secretary; Miss Josie Kennedy, treasurer; Miss Genevieve James, financial secretary.

The new Ladies' Branch was to be "entirely free" of the male union in matters of finances and in its day-to-day operations. The women were also free to draft their own constitutional by-laws, providing that these were generally in accord with the tenets of the main NIWA Constitution.[52] Following the NIWA's philosophy to form a broadly-based industrial union, the Ladies' Branch issued an invitation for "all other ladies who are wage earners in any capacity" to join in the movement.[53] This offer proved attractive. Starting with an initial membership of 60, the NIWA Ladies' Branch had signed over 200 members by the time of its first regular meeting, held on 29 August.[54] At this meeting the women were addressed by NIWA leaders, including E.J. Whitty and Warwick Smith. This proved to be the pattern for these early gatherings, and, for example, Association executive officer Walter O'D. Kelly spoke to the Ladies' Branch about his travels on the mainland observing factory conditions later in August.[55]

This subject was of primary concern for the working women of St. John's who were forced to labour in condi-

[52] NIWA Constitution. Article 14, Section 5. In other words, the Ladies' Branch was not intended to function simply as an auxiliary to the male union.

[53] Daily News, 9 August 1918.

[54] Evening Telegram, 30 August 1918.

[55] Daily News, 17 September 1918.

tions which were a testament to the absence of any meaningful factory acts in Newfoundland. To this end, the new union quickly established a course of action as president Salter Earle arranged to meet with city employers to discuss the implementation of progressive workplace measures. Making use of her considerable negotiating skills, Salter Earle held talks with the managers of three major employers of female labour, the Newfoundland Knitting Mills, the Newfoundland Clothing Company, and the Colonial Cordage Company (known locally as the Ropewalk). Specific issues discussed covered a variety of concerns including child labour, wages, sick pay, piece-work, and factory sanitation.[56] Immediately, Salter Earle and her executive committee had a test case for their union. This concerned an employee at the Ropewalk, Agnes Hickey (an orphan aged 13) who was forced by her guardian to leave school and work in order to pay for her room and board.[57] For this she earned a paltry $3.30 per week. The issue here was not her guardian's behaviour (as this women also worked at the factory taking home $12 per week) but rather concerned the general question of child labour. The Ladies' Branch successfully argued that this girl should return to school and be given the chance to escape the factory system. This case was but one example taken from

[56] Ibid., 30 August 1918.

[57] Ibid., 19, 21 September 1918.

a list of such problems which existed hidden from public view. The Ropewalk was particularly notorious for its exploitive employment practices and earlier that year the NIWA executive had argued for improvements in the factory's workplace, obtaining a list of concessions including a new schedule of wages.[58]

Further evidence of a positive interaction between the male and female membership of the NIWA was demonstrated by the Association's willingness to take into consideration the special needs of working women. Recognizing that women earned lower wages the Association voted to allow these "girl workers" to share in the benefits of their co-operative store at a lower entrance fee than the men. This decision was in addition to the lower membership dues set for working women joining with the NIWA.[59] In exchange for Association help with guest lecturers, Julia Salter Earle was frequently asked to address the male membership at the LSPU Hall. Salter Earle was not reticent in expressing the serious concerns facing working women in St. John's. She told the men that women were forced to deal with many of the same issues of the day, especially when it came to wartime inflation stripping

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[58] Ibid., 21 March 1918. For background information on the Colonial Cordage Company see, A.B. Perlin, The Story of Newfoundland (St. John's: Creative Publishers, 1958), 201.

[59] Evening Telegram, 17 November 1918.

workers of their real wages.[60] Salter Earle wondered whether working women could keep the new jobs opened to them during the war, and she stressed the need to pressure the government into action regarding these social concerns. Following up on this latter suggestion, Salter Earle launched a letter-writing campaign with the intention of drawing the attention of MHAs to the plight of working women and young girls in St. John's. In one letter concerned with child labour Salter Earle wrote:

> It seems incredible that men who wish to be regarded as honest and fair will combine to sweat young girls of tender years in their factories for a wage or pittance which is not sufficient to nourish their bodies so that they may be fit to perform the task that their callous foremen and managers insist must be accomplished day in and day out.[61]

To redress this problem the NIWA Ladies' Branch considered forming a "Girls' Branch" for these children which would be affiliated with the city's working women so that this sector of the workforce could gain an effective voice for change.[62]

The NIWA Ladies' Branch was instrumental in lobbying city businesses to adopt progressive job measures in

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[60] Daily News, 30 February 1919. The average wage for working women at this time was between $1.60 and $3.50 per week.

[61] Evening Advocate, 17 September 1918.

[62] Ibid.

working environments that employed largely female labour. In one instance, the Newfoundland Clothing Company decided to install extensive sanitary facilities on site, including hot water baths, for the benefit of their employees, many of whom lacked such appliances in their own homes. Other factories were pressured to provide lunch rooms serving hot meals, health insurance schemes, and improved first aid facilities.[63] Most dramatic was the success these women had in instituting an eight-hour day in many of the city's clothing factories. This move was led by the Royal Stores clothing factory, and soon followed by the Newfoundland Clothing and Semi-Ready Clothing companies.[64] This victory proved temporary as Newfoundland's deteriorating economic conditions after 1919 thereby undercutting the bargaining positions of all labour groups. But before the onslaught of this depression, St. John's working women demonstrated their resolve to act collectively in their battles with local business enterprises.

Throughout the fall and winter of 1918 the women of

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[63] Evening Telegram, 20 November 1919. An article by Warwick Smith details the recent improvements in city factories. From the comments made by union leaders, such as Smith, it is difficult to judge whether these factory improvements were envisioned as a method to push working women out of the workplace in the name of health and safety laws. For an example of this debate see, Frager, "No Proper Deal," 55; Nancy Woloch, Women and the American Experience (New York: Knopf, 1984), 244.

[64] Forestell, "Working Women," 1-28.

the NIWA struck over the issues of a closed shop workplace and low wages. On 18 November the Ladies' Branch, now almost 500 members strong, walked off their jobs at the firm of Browning's, a large manufacturer of bread and biscuit products.[65] The women joined with the company's male workers in demanding wage parity with the pay scale offered at Harvey and Company's bakery operations.[66] These workers were met with the determined opposition of the Browning's management who absolutely refused to negotiate their wage offer. Both male and female Association members began to collect a strike fund as the prospect of an early settlement appeared remote. Determined to hold out for a victory, the NIWA remained off the job for nearly one month at which time the Association's executive officers, admitting defeat, called an end to the strike.[67] Despite the loss this dispute demonstrated that the working men and women of St. John's could organize a co-operative protest and sustain this action over an extended period of time. The result of the Browning's strike contrasted with that of another walkout held simultaneously at a city factory well-known for employee troubles -- the Colonial Cordage Company.

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[65]Daily News, 17 September 1918; Evening Advocate, 21 November 1918.

[66]Evening Advocate, 22 November 1918.

[67]The Browning's workers returned on 16 December.

The trouble at the Ropewalk began on 21 November when unionists left their jobs to protest having to work alongside a female employee who had refused to join the NIWA Ladies' Branch.[68] Soon after the strike began the matter appeared to be resolved in the union's favour as the employee in question was dismissed by the factory foreman, but this solution was quickly reversed by the company's manager. Further negotiations failed to break the impasse and the Ropewalk ceased operations. As in the Browning's dispute, members of the Ladies' Branch organized a series of fund-raising dances and bake sales to build up a strike fund. Financial support was forthcoming from male NIWA members as well.[69] Production at the Ropewalk was suspended until 2 December, when a compromise was reached between the workers and management. This arrangement allowed the non-union employee to return to her job only if she paid the NIWA's initiation fee and dues. In return, workers agreed to notify the Ropewalk management of developing disputes prior to undertaking unilateral action.

By their actions the members of the NIWA Ladies' Branch clearly indicated their intentions to go beyond

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[68] Evening Telegram, 23 November 1918. The strike was primarily concerned with the matter of union recognition as the NIWA had obtained wage increases for all Ropewalk employees in March and August 1918.

[69] Evening Advocate, 7 December 1918.

"bread and butter" issues related to wages and working conditions and push for more fundamental changes in Newfoundland society. To accomplish these changes the Association sought to elicit the support of all working women and to move beyond the city's factories for future members. In this period, an attempt to organize female sales clerks was launched, but it fell victim to the general economic downturn which left many women jobless.[70] Even as Newfoundland's depression forced St. John's factories to operate on "short time" or reduced hours, the NIWA Ladies' Branch continued to push for changes for the city's working women.[71] The success of these women in collective organization serves to refute the concept that a debilitating "feminine psychology" prevented female unionization. Instead, these examples in St. John's tend to support the notion that femininity served as a basis of strength. Wayne Roberts, one of a number of scholars who have rejected the concept of a negative feminine psychology, has written that "the working women's sense of femininity was not a pacifying illusion or psychological sanction against collective action ... [instead] it formed part of a separate working class identity."[72] The NIWA

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[70] Daily News, 27 June 1919.

[71] Forestell, "Working Women," 28-43.

[72] Roberts, Honest Womanhood, 4; see also, Star Rosenthal, "Union Maids: Organized Women Workers in Vancouver, 1900-1915," BC Studies, 41 (Spring 1979), 54.

Ladies' Branch worked to foster this sense of identity by engaging in numerous social activities at which young working women could meet one another and learn more about union organization. In this way they served to refute the "myth of women's unorganizability."[73]

III

If the last year of World War I was to be any indication of the future, Newfoundland's postwar political era would be a continuation of the colony's history of fractious party intrigue. On 5 January 1918, the Liberal leader William F. Lloyd officially assumed the prime minister's office, a position he gained without having to resort to a public vote. Lloyd had been serving as acting premier since the colony's elected leader, Edward Morris, had left the country for England soon after forming an all-party National government in July 1917.[74] In St. John's, members of the city's labour movement reacted to the news of Lloyd's premiership with grave suspicion. Few

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[73]The NIWA Ladies' Branch organized a wide range of social activities intended to educate its members on issues pertinent to the union movement. Plans were discussed with regard to the purchase of a separate club room for working women, but this scheme apparently was pushed aside by the postwar economic crisis.

[74]S.J.R. Noel, Politics in Newfoundland (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 124. Sir Edward Morris was elevated to the peerage "for services to the Empire," becoming Baron Morris of Waterford in Lloyd George's New Year's honours list of 1918.

had much confidence in the new prime minister's ability to mediate between the deeply divided factions of the coalition government. Many claimed that politically Lloyd was beholden to Coaker's Unionist party and that group's unsettling connections to the Reid family.[75] The potent combination of the Coaker-Reid alliance posed a serious threat to the impressive gains made by the St. John's labour movement. With Lloyd safely ensconced as leader of the national government the prospect for substantive legislative progress which would address working-class concerns remained remote. With each new permutation of the cabinet, the government pushed back the deadline for the now long overdue general elections. The existing House of Assembly had been in office since October 1913 and many of its opponents viewed this latest development as yet another cynical attempt to manipulate parliament using the excuse of the wartime emergency.[76] For labour, this move was particularly galling as it only served to deny the union movement its opportunity to introduce

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[75]For some time Coaker had lobbied both the government and Reid Newfoundland Company to re-locate one of the coastal freight terminals at Port Union and eventually this was successful. In addition, a considerable scandal arose over Coaker's travels to the United States and Canada at the expense of the Reid Newfoundland Company as part of an elaborate scheme to bring Newfoundland into confederation with Canada. See, for example, W.D. Reid's letters to the Daily News, 9; 10 January 1918.

[76]An extension of the legislature could be granted under the Emergency War Measures Act of 1914.

legislative social reforms. Issues such as the formation of a department of labour or new factory acts which had frequently been dangled as election promises were now retracted. The reaction was swift. St. John's labour following the NIWA's lead, announced their intention to form an independent labour party. (The decision was to nominate a slate of three candidates each for the ridings of St. John's East and West.[77] These plans had been discussed previously, but they were quickly pushed forward with the unveiling of the new government cabinet. The entrance of the NIWA into the political arena was a risky venture as some city unionists were bound to object to such a bold move.

On 12 January 1918 a "special convention" was held by the NIWA to nominate the men to contest the next general election. The decision was made to enter the national political scene rather than engage in municipal politics because labour leaders felt that their mandate for change could best be realized in the House of Assembly as the mood of the public offered a "golden opportunity" to obtain the representation denied to labour in the past. Addressing the meeting, Warwick Smith claimed that these candidates would take a strictly independent stand or they "would not affiliate with any other group or groups in the Assembly, but would be bound to conserve the interests of

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[77] Daily Star, 5 January 1918.

labour alone."[78] This desire to maintain a strict independence was no doubt a reaction to the outrageously partisan nature of Newfoundland politics. St. John's labour leaders realized only too well that the slightest appearance of a connection with any of the colony's established parties would play into the hands of their Water Street opponents. Despite this caution the Liberals, Tories, and FPU all exchanged claims and counter-claims that this new labour party was only a ploy to secure the balance of power in the coalition government. The NIWA stipulated that election expenses were to be defrayed by voluntary subscriptions and the new party would enlist its members only as they came forward. This plan was similar to the Canadian experience in that political candidates generally were not sponsored directly by unions.[79] The new Workingmen's Party was to remain an individual membership organization. Neither the NIWA, LSPU or any of the city's affiliated craft unions joined the party as a group. Where Newfoundland labourism appears to have differed from the Canadian model was in an appeal which extended beyond skilled workers or crafts-workers to include many elements of the unskilled and

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[78] Ibid., 12 January 1918. Although at first silent, Coaker launched a virulent campaign against the NIWA's political activites once the election date was set for 3 November 1919.

[79] Craig Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class," Labour/Le Travail, 13 (Spring 1984), 46-47.

semi-skilled labour force. It was significant that when the Workingmen's Party chose a prominent leader to act as the group's chairman during the run-up to the fall 1919 general election they chose LSPU president "Big Jim" McGrath and an executive body selected to represent every aspect of the St. John's labour movement.[80]

Despite their rapid rise to prominence, the leadership of the NIWA reasoned that they should tread softly in the matter of political affiliations. Not all of the city's unionists accepted the Association's new role as self-proclaimed champion of the Island's working class. This cautious mood is in evidence in the premiere issue of The Industrial Worker, released in May 1918. In an editorial entitled "Democracy Explains Our Power," the Association stressed its independence from the justly reviled world of Newfoundland's established party politics:

> The NIWA will grind no man's axe, it will let no one use it as a stepping stone, it will not be manipulated by the few to the detriment of the many.... 'The Association is in a position to know that it possesses great power. It has gained this power through the large membership who were attracted to its ranks because they were impressed by its sincerity and knew it would not use its power in an

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[80] Evening Telegram, 18 September 1919. Supporting the Workingmen's Party were delegates from the Brotherhood of Carpenters, the Truckmen's Protective Union, the Shipwright's union, Water Street clerks, Firemen's Protective Union, and Printers' Union.

> unjust cause.. Our membership embraces wage earners of every class. We are a pure democracy in this respect, the true NIWA spirit being that one man is as good as another....[81]

Initially the NIWA had adopted a "non-political and non-partisan" stance in its treatment of national and local politics, but this position did not preclude the Association's active lobbying of the government on a wide range of social issues from an eight-hour day to public ownership.[82] These efforts met with some success although progress was often painfully slow.

For some members of the Association's executive committee the traditional process of introducing progressive legislation was ineffective. Politicians such as Edward Morris had long claimed to be defenders of the common worker when in fact they instead only protected the privileges of Water Street merchants and industrialists. Prominent in the group advocating a expanded political role for the NIWA was president Phillip Bennett and many of his executive committee including Warwick Smith, John Cadwell, Michael Foley, and William Linegar. Opposition to this direction was less focussed, but it included the first editor of The Industrial Worker Michael James and the president and many of the members of the Grand Falls

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[81] The Industrial Worker (St. John's) Vol. 1, No. 1, 18 May 1918, 1.

[82] See for example, Evening Telegram 9 June 1917; Daily Star, 5 January 1918.

NIWA branch.[83] Yet much of this conservatism was dispelled after the Association's confrontation with the Reid Newfoundland Company in spring 1918.[84] The strong support offered to the strikers and the lengthy list of job concessions secured by Bennett and his executive convinced many doubters that the NIWA was indeed "a power in the land." With initial preparations in place for St. John's labour to contest the coming election, Association members awaited the call to campaign actively. But the war continued to drag on and after the November Armistice Prime Minister Lloyd allowed himself to become entangled in the Paris Peace Conference. These events again delayed the long anticipated election until 1919. Before this event, Lloyd found himself participating in the dissolution of his government in the most bizarre of circumstances.[85] When the extraordinary events of 20 May were resolved, Sir Michael P. Cashin became the new prim-

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[83]Michael J. James, letter to the Evening Telegram, 9 May 1918; Minutes of the NIWA Grand Falls Branch No. 3, February 1918-March 1922. Rolf Hattenhauer Labour Collection, Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University.

[84]Daily Star, 18 September 1919.

[85]For an explanation of Lloyd's fall see, Noel, Politics, 128; Ian McDonald, "W.F. Coaker and the Fishermen's Protective Union in Newfoundland Politics, 1908-1925," unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of London, 1971, 183-89. The Lloyd government fell to a unamimous vote of non-confidence raised by the opposition, but seconded by Lloyd himself.

minister of a barely cohesive coalition.[86] Now the call for a general election was again taken up with the result that the date finally was set for 3 November.

With the announcement of the election the St. John's labour movement could begin their campaign preparations in earnest. In addition to an all-union committee formed to select prospective candidates several other groups were closely involved in pre-election activities. These included the Great War Veteran's Association and members of the Amalgamated Fishermen's Union.[87] These groups issued a joint resolution supporting the formation of a labour party to counteract those politicians who were "at present nominated to perpetuate the ascendancy of the classes over the masses."[88] Once again emphasis was placed on the diversity which was to be found in this

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[86]Michael P. Cashin (1846-1926) was first elected to the House of Assembly as an independent for Ferryland in 1893. Cashin ran in three elections for Edward Morris's People's Party, serving as Minister of Finance and Customs between 1909-1917. Although Cashin could claim to follow in the footsteps of Morris, it was Richard Squires who truly took up this mantle.

[87]The Amalgamated Fishermen's Union, formed in March 1919, was ostensibly an organization of St. John's fishermen and labourers, but the involvement of A.B. Morine with the group raises the question of its political purpose in the coming election. The union appears to have been a move to block any expansion of the FPU to St. John's and to counter Coaker's claims to represent the sole voice of the fishermen. Apparently the union was short-lived and largely ineffective. See, Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador, vol. II, ed. J.R. Smallwood (Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1984), 177.

[88]Evening Telegram, 27 May 1919.

labour party. For it was to represent "men employed in nearly every walk of life ... labourer and mechanic, clerk, and tradesmen, fishermen and farmer, soldier and civilian."[89] A formal motion to enter candidates in the forthcoming election was passed at an NIWA meeting in early September and later that month at a meeting of 800 unionists held at the Casino Theatre a committee of fifty was selected to choose the six labour candidates.[90] The buildup to the November election was a measured, deliberate exercise as St. John's unionists sought to ensure the success of this effort. Lacking the benefit of past electoral experience, the labour party was careful to elicit the support of the widest possible range of voters, hence a nominating committee of no less than fifty members. These proceedings were conducted with strong overtones of moral respectability. The Workingmen's Party sought representatives who were "honest, trusted, and capable," men who would support "justice and fair play."[91] A representative for the shipwrights union likened the country to a ship that "was in a bad state and needed good men to repair and look after her."[92] Those in attendance argued that recent wartime conditions had demonstrated the

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[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid., 18 September 1919.

[91] Ibid.; See also, Heron "Labourism," 60.

[92] Daily Star, 18 September 1919.

transparent relationship between business and the state in the most reprehensible manner. If labour failed to act now the result would only be a continuation of the tyranny of "parasitic" business monopolies as personified by the Reid family. In this regard the Workingmen's Party was careful to delineate their contempt for exploitive monopolists as opposed to honest businessmen who accumulated their wealth through hard work and diligence. James McGrath, President of the LSPU, commented that "no honest employer need to have any fear of what labour intends to do."[93] City unionists were conscious that existing circumstances offered workers a chance to make their voices heard. "The opportunity is at hand and if not grasped now may never again be available."[94] This sense of opportunity gave an added urgency to labour's preparations during the weeks to come.

Following its formation, the "committee of fifty" quickly moved to nominate the six candidates and a prospective slate of names was released to the press several days later. Listed as candidates for St. John's West were Michael P. Gibbs, William Linegar, and John Cadwell; the St. John's East candidates were to be Michael

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[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid.

Foley, C.W. Ryan, and Harry Bartlett.[95] In considering several of these men, the Workingmen's Party displayed much of the political confusion associated with the labourist idealogy. Discussion rose over whether to present voters with a conservative element as embodied in well-known "respectable" candidates or to select strong unionists who remained closely allied to rank-and-file workers. It was here that the neophyte labour party became entangled in Newfoundland's byzantine party politics. With the inclusion of Gibbs as a potential candidate, the Workingmen's Party was vulnerable to charges of outside manipulation. A former friend of Edward Morris, Michael Gibbs also had connections with Richard Squires, the leader of the recently formed Liberal-Reform party. Rumours circulated that Gibbs and Squires hoped to draw members of the new labour party into the Liberal-Reform fold and thus split a large percentage of the largely Catholic, working-class vote in St. John's. This move would funnel away support from Prime Minister

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[95] Evening Telegram, 12, 20 September 1919; Michael P. Gibbs was a St. John's lawyer with a history of labour involvement, see Chapter 3; William Linegar was president of the St. John's Journeymen Coopers' Union and a member of the NIWA's Executive Committee; John Cadwell was an iron moulder and also a NIWA Executive Committee member; C.W. Ryan was a grocery store proprietor and a city councillor; Harry Bartlett was a building contractor; Michael Foley was a draper and member of the Brotherhood of Clerks and Assistants (an NIWA affiliate). Foley was also a former fisherman at Cape St. Mary's, and a mill worker at Grand Falls and Sydney, Nova Scotia.

Michael Cashin and his Liberal-Progressive party.[96] Some NIWA members realized that inclusion of men such as Gibbs, Ryan and Bartlett threatened to compromise the independence of the fledgling Workingmen's Party and they proposed a resolution that only men who performed manual labour should be eligible for nomination.[97] After further debate it was decided to promote candidates who were demonstrably free of any former party allegiance. Spurning repeated offers to join either the Liberal-Reform or Liberal-Progressive parties, the labour movement chose to remain independent and hope that its appeal would prove wide enough to secure seats in the next House of Assembly. When the final list of Workingmen's Party candidates was announced three names remained -- Linegar, Foley, and Cadwell, all legitimate labour leaders. All would contest the election in St. John's West as this riding contained the highest concentration of working-class votes.[98]

The Workingmen's party campaigned on a platform which stressed many of the social reforms the NIWA had cham-

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[96]The Liberal-Progressive party was the new name for the People's party as of September 1919. The term Liberal was something of a non sequitur as the party in reality represented the conservative merchant class.

[97]Evening Advocate, 18 September 1919. LSPU president James J. McGrath spoke against this resolution as he wanted the party to appeal to the broadest possible section of the working class.

[98]Three candidates were to be elected in both ridings of St. John's West and East.

pioned in its door-to-door petition during the spring of 1918. These included a plan to construct housing for workers, an eight-hour day, a minimum wage, greater wage equity between working men and women, legislation to improve factory conditions and encourage public ownership of municipal utilities, the establishment of a department of labour, more rigorous taxation of "excess profits," and finally the repeal of the "outrage to the working man," Newfoundland's Prohibition Act.[99] The presence of the new labour party on the electoral scene focussed attention on this platform and the general concerns of working people. Predictably both Squires and Cashin attempted to draw away support from the Workingmen's Party with promises to introduce similar social reforms.[100] At the same time both established parties tried to smear the reputations of the labour candidates by charging that they were in the employ of the very business interests labour purported to oppose.

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[99]Newfoundland held a national plebiscite on the issue of prohibition on 30 November 1915 which was overwhelmingly passed, mainly on the strength of the Protestant (especially Methodist) vote. See, Noel, Politics, 131-32; also, McDonald, "Coaker and the FPU," 190-217.

[100]For example, see, Evening Telegram, 30 October 1919, "To the People who work in factories,"; Daily Star, 1 November 1919. The pro-Squires Star was particularly direct in its appeal, "The newspaper in Newfoundland which actively and persistently backed the NIWA, against the Reid Newfoundland Company was the Star." Workingmen's Party election posters warned voters of this. "Do not be led astray now that Labour's Hour is about to Strike."

Judging from the partisan rhetoric to be found in the group of St. John's newspapers controlled by the two "Liberal" parties the election had re-charged Newfoundland's internecine denominational struggle between Catholics and Protestants. This animosity threatened to undermine the political plans of the city's labour movement. Initially, some unionists had expressed their concerns that the Workingmen's Party would fall victim to a "three cornered" fight between the highly polarized existing factions, the Liberal-Progressive, Liberal-Reform, and Union parties. They argued that this battle would push the new labour party out from the centre of public attention while the other three squared off against one another. This scenario could have developed except that in September, the Liberal-Reform party led by Richard Squires engineered one of the most cynical alliances in the history of Newfoundland politics.[101] With the announcement that William Coaker and his FPU were formally to join forces with the Liberal-Reformists, Squires had ensured that he would soon be the Island's next prime minister.[102] Now instead of having Squires and Coaker fighting for the same Protestant votes the two could concentrate their efforts on enticing Catholic defectors.

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[101]For a detailed explanation of this alliance, see, McDonald, "Coaker and the FPU," 190-217.

[102]Noel, Politics, 143.

For St. John's labour the result of this pact would prove debilitating. Of the two major parties, Cashin's Liberal-Progressives had retained the largely Catholic support on the Avalon Peninsula (especially in St. John's) that in the past had been so shrewdly cultivated by Edward Morris. Now Squires and Coaker were poised to capture the Protestant vote on the Island's north-east coast and to make significant inroads on the mixed denominational representation in the south. In the capital city, voters might now be reluctant to place their support with a newly formed and untested labour party as this could split the Catholic support for Cashin and provide Squires and Coaker with an easy overall victory. The Liberal-Reform and Liberal-Progressive parties acknowledged that the Workingmen's Party could be the election's wild card and both groups attempted to lure labour representatives to their ranks, or failing that to discredit them publicly. The campaign continued in this vein in the weeks preceding the election. Suddenly amongst the pages of the St. John's daily press, stories on the Workingmen's Party were conspicuously absent as both established parties sought to downplay the labour element. What reports did emerge were often dismissive and condescending. In the battle of the editorials, the bi-weekly The Industrial Worker found itself heavily outgunned. Historian Ian McDonald has written that having access to a partisan daily newspaper

was "the essential tool for engaging in politics in Newfoundland."[103] Lacking an effective medium of communication the Workingmen's Party failed to carry its message beyond the city's core of committed unionists.

In the end, voters did align themselves along denominational lines, with Cashin taking the Catholic support, while Protestants fell in behind Squires and Coaker.[104] In St. John's West, the three Workingmen's Party candidates trailed both the Liberal-Progressives and Liberal-Reform parties, with the latter winning 2 of the 3 riding seats.[105] Despite this setback, labour had shown impressive strength in a first-time election, polling 20.8

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[103] McDonald, "Coaker and the FPU," 196.

[104] Noel, Politics, 143. Cashin retained all but 3 of the 14 Catholic seats, but elected only one member in a riding with a Protestant majority. Ian McDonald feels that while sectarianism did play a role in the 1919 election, it was not the deciding factor. Rather it was the Squires-Coaker alliances ability to label Cashin a pro-Reid, pro-confederation, and pro-St. John's leader. For McDonald's analysis, see "Coaker and the FPU," 171-217.

[105] The results for the three seats for St. John's West were as follows:

Squires (Liberal-Reform)	1954
Brownrigg (L-R)	1839
J.R. Bennett (Liberal-Progressive)	1808
Martin (L-P)	1749
Campbell (L-R)	1658
Mullaly (L-P)	1646
Linegar (Workingmen's Party)	1025
Cadwell (WP)	933
Foley (WP)	877
Tait (Independent)	102

The final standings in the House of Assembly were Liberal-Reform 24, Liberal-Progressive 12.

per cent of the total popular vote. After this decisive defeat Michael Cashin conceded defeat and the Squires government took office on 17 November. As was customary in the British parliamentary system, elected MHAs chosen to serve in the cabinet were required to run in by-elections. Therefore in St. John's West both Richard Squires and his associate H.J. Brownrigg (Minister of Finance and Customs) were obliged to return to the polls on 22 January 1920.[106] This provided the city's labour movement with a second chance to contest seats in the West End. With two such high profile candidates as Squires and Brownrigg the by-election was bound to be a test of the government's standing amongst the public. As such an election was predictable, St. John's labour leaders contemplated their next move soon after the close of the general election. Clearly the city's working class were troubled by the prospect of four years of a Squires-Coaker government as both men had been closely identified with the Reid family during recent years.[107] If the results of the November election remained unchanged, the coming years would indeed prove difficult. For it was Coaker who had repeatedly threatened to transform the capital back into a

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[106]St. John's West was the only contested by-election as the others were awarded to the government by acclamation on 20 December. See, Evening Telegram, 31 December 1919.

[107]The pro-Cashin Evening Telegram listed some of these connections on 10 October 1919.

"wilderness" and see that "grass would grow on Water Street." As for Squires, was not he the true heir apparent of Edward Morris and his People's Party, an organization which had always made use of Reid money to further its ends? The Reids themselves knew well what was at stake and they had always displayed a determination to safeguard their privileged position. In the face of such a triumvirate Labour could expect little in the way of progressive social legislation. The "golden opportunity" of which many unionists had spoken appeared to be slipping away, yet one last chance remained to place a labour representative on the floor of the Assembly.

Before a meeting of the Workingmen's Party, held at the LSPU Hall on 16 December 1919, William Linegar was selected by an overwhelming majority to be the labour candidate in the upcoming January by-election.[108] Linegar, the respected president of the Journeymen Coopers' Union and long time labour activist, had proven himself to be the movement's most capable politician. Many felt that he represented labour's best hope of victory in St. John's West. But there were serious problems to address. The party's finances were exhausted and a lack of organizational expertise had probably cost them votes in the general election. Moreover, Linegar would be facing none other than Richard Squires himself

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[108] Evening Telegram, 18 December 1919.

for a seat in the West End. Time was running short for the nominations closed on 20 December and so a speedy decision was required. After much internal debate the Workingmen's Party chose to contest the by-election alongside one representative of Cashin's Liberal-Progressive party in the two seats available in St. John's West. The possibility of such a coalition became practical once Cashin had agreed to all of the labour movement's concerns for political independence. The Workingmen's Party were careful to stress that in their opinion this arrangement in no way compromised labour's autonomy. Whether this claim can be defended is difficult to evaluate. Certainly the arrangement was expedient for labour as they now had access to Cashin's considerable finances, and the alternative was to withdraw from active political contention. The Liberal-Progressives acknowledged Linegar as "the special labour representative of the Opposition and agreed to recognize him as such in the Assembly when elected as being the Workingmen's member."[109] In this regard Linegar and his party were to remain "free to take any stand they wished to adopt."[110] In subsequent meetings Linegar's candidacy was ratified by both parties. James T. Martin, the front-running Liberal-Progressive in the general

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[109] Ibid., 19 December 1919.

[110] Ibid., 18 December 1919; Craig Heron suggests that labour supporters were "principled, on the whole, but all too often simply naive." Heron, "Labourism," 74.

election, was chosen to join Linegar on the coalition ticket.[111] Even taking into consideration the electoral boosterism of pro-Cashin newspapers, the enthusiasm for the new alliance seemed widespread as many city labourers apparently believed that the Workingmen's Party would succeed now that it had the support of an established party machine.[112] This view was presented in a letter to the editor of the Evening Telegram from "A Linegar Man":

> Let me assure you that he will receive the votes of the thousand men who voted for him in the General Election, and a great many more who did not then vote for him, because they did not think that the Workingmen's Party would be elected being by itself and without funds or financial support.[113]

News of the Linegar-Martin ticket spread quickly and in St. John's the pro-government dailies wasted no time in attacking the arrangement. Editorials decrying "The Betrayal of Labour" and "Workers Deceived" were typical of the Squires-Coaker assault.[114] These statements were countered in a lengthy series of replies written by the youthful J.R. Smallwood. Smallwood claimed that the recent upsurge in labour activism represented a new

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[111] James T. Martin was a St. John's undertaker and president of the Star of the Sea Society, a Catholic benevolent society in the city.

[112] Evening Telegram, 23 December 1919.

[113] Ibid., 20 December 1919.

[114] Evening Advocate, 18 December 1919; Daily Star, 19 December 1919.

understanding of the Island's political economy and that "the Workingmen of St. John's, particularly the West End, have been educated in labour matters, in the past two years more than in all the years preceding."[115] They now understood the "supreme necessity for labour representation in the House."[116] The consequences of a failure to secure this representation were amply clear. In the short months since assuming the premiership Squires had presided over a series of rapid price increases in many basic foodstuffs, including flour, sugar and butterine (margarine).[117] One of the beneficiaries of this largess was H.J. Brownrigg who owned one of the city's major wholesale grocery businesses and who in the past had made considerable profits from bootleg liquor operations.[118] Between them, Squires and Coaker owed numerous favours to those who had worked to put them in power. Following the accepted Newfoundland practice, it was now time to distribute the "spoils of office."

During the last few days before the by-election both the government and opposition candidates traded insults

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[115] Evening Telegram, 30 December 1919.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid., 22 January 1920.

[118] Ibid., Brownrigg's opponents charged that his taverns had been allowed to remain in business throughout the war despite the adoption of a national Prohibition Act in 1915.

and accusations as the outcome remained in doubt. On election day voting was heavy and as the early results were tallied less than fifty votes separated all four candidates.[119] But in the end the results again confirmed Squires and Brownrigg as the victors.[120] This second defeat did not lessen Linegar's interest in political affairs as he continued his involvement into the 1920s.[121] St. John's labour now shifted their attentions to municipal politics as several candidates contested seats at this level during in early 1920s.[122] This interest in the St. John's municipal council was one of the legacies of the emergence of the labour movement in Newfoundland's political arena. As historian Craig Heron has noted, concerning Canada, labourism stimulated greater working-class participation:

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[119] Daily News, 24 January 1920.

[120] The results of the by-election in St. John's West were as follows:

Squires (Liberal-Reform)	2616
Brownrigg (L-R)	2594
Martin (Liberal-Labour-Progressive)	2267
Linegar (L-L-P)	2223

Linegar received 22.9 per cent of the total vote in this four-way race.

[121] Linegar ran unsuccessfully in the 1923 general election as a Liberal-Labour-Progressive for St. John's West. In 1924, he was elected as an anti-Squires Liberal-Conservative.

[122] Edward J. Whitty, a long time NIWA Executive Committee member, ran unsuccessfully as a labour candidate in the 1921 St. John's municipal elections. Julia Salter Earle almost gained a municipal seat in 1925.

> As a movement it reasserted a faith in radical democracy in the face of political corruption and manipulation and, perhaps more importantly, in the face of new elitist theories of the state which were modelled on the private corporation.[123]

In St. John's, the Workingmen's Party took advantage of this rise in radical democracy to intervene aggressively in a sphere of Newfoundland's social and political life which had previously been the enclave of the community's elite. Despite an ideological platform which often tended to be vague and contradictory, the participation of the city's labour movement in the electoral process marked an epoch in the history of Newfoundland labourism. Wartime privations and a growing sense of outrage over the corruption and insensitivity of those in positions of power and influence forged important links among the city's working class. Together skilled craftsworkers and labourers discovered that they now had much in common, and further that this coalition could challenge the system which had so miserably failed them all.

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[123]Heron, "Labourism," 75.

Chapter Seven

The Last Years: The Decline of the NIWA

Newfoundland entered the second decade of the twentieth century in a precarious economic state. The transition from a buoyant wartime economy which had exceeded all previous trade records to one of peacetime austerity proved to be extremely difficult. Due to a limited economic base dependent on resource industries, the colony was vulnerable to external market forces. Certainly the consequences of a worldwide economic downturn were experienced elsewhere, but as one English observer writing in The Times of London noted, "In few countries has the change from prosperity to adversity following the aftermath of the war been so marked as in Newfoundland."[1] This state of affairs was in some ways anticipated by a few St. John's businessmen as they scanned the economic indicators for a sense of what the future might offer. Back in 1918, the Newfoundland Board of Trade cautioned merchants and industrialists not to expect the Island's current prosperity to continue unabated after the Armistice as the war had artificially inflated the export trade:

> This unprecedented position in the trade of the Dominion is due largely, if not wholly, to war conditions. We are essentially a country producing

[1] The Times (London), 18 July 1921. Reprinted in the Evening Telegram (St. John's), 18 August 1921.

> food and raw materials that have been in great demand through the conditions of war prevailing on the European Continent, and the prosperity is largely attributable to the interference that these conditions have had on the operations of our principal competitors.[2]

Despite these warnings many failed to grasp the ominous ramifications of a postwar slump. Much of the profit from Newfoundland's wartime commodity trade surplus was not reinvested in the community in order to diversify the economy's narrow base.[3] So when the price of basic exports, such as salt cod, began to fluctuate there was little recourse but to ride the downward trend. In addition, earlier pessimistic predictions over whether the colony could retain its prominent position in the saltfish trade were now starting to be realized. Newfoundland was unsuccessful in its attempts to rationalize its fishery to ensure a dependable standard of quality control for the export market.[4] In this way the fishing industry "steadily lost ground in output and productivity relative to

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[2]Newfoundland Board of Trade, Annual Report, 1918, 4-5.

[3]David A. Alexander, "Newfoundland's Traditional Economy and Development to 1934," Acadiensis, 5 (2) 1976, 76.

[4]Newfoundland Royal Commission Report, 1933 (The Amulree Report), (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1934), 106.

Norwegian and Icelandic competitors."[5] The critical export markets in Portugal, Spain, Greece, Italy, as well as South America and the Caribbean were in sharp decline compared to World War I.[6] Compounding these difficulties was a poor fishery in terms of fish stocks, especially when compared to the outstanding bounties of the latter war years. Export revenues derived from the cod fishery fell from a record high of nearly $26 million in 1918-1919 to $13 million in 1920-1921.[7] Again the transition from wartime prosperity to postwar disaster was dramatic. Outport fishermen who had for the first time enjoyed an income greater "than they required for immediate necessities," now found themselves returned to their customary state of economic dependence.[8] In national terms, this overall loss of revenue was devastating. Summarizing the colony's postwar financial position, historian S.J.R. Noel has written:

> After five successive years of rising government revenue and balanced budgets, for fiscal year 1920-1 the financial returns disclosed an unprecedented deficit of $4,271,474--

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[5]David Alexander, The Decay of Trade: An Economic History of the Newfoundland Saltfish Trade, 1935-1965, Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies, No. 19 (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977), 1.

[6]Newfoundland Board of Trade, Annual Report, 1919, 6-14.

[7]Amulree Report, 111.

[8]Ibid., 46.

> a vast figure in proportion to total revenue, which amounted to only $8,438,039.[9]

The downturn in the fishery was not the only problem with which the colony had to contend. With the outcome of the war decided, Newfoundland was now forced to address the problem of its substantial foreign debt amassed during the conflict. This amounted to $1.75 million annually for the principal loans and related service charges, which placed a heavy burden on the government.[10] In addition to the war debt, the Newfoundland railway continued to drain the national treasury of millions of dollars. In June 1920, the Reid Newfoundland Company informed the Squires government that unless the railway received extended financial support the Company would default on its contract. As a result of this threat the railway received a loan of $1.5 million and a commitment to cover net losses of over $100,000 for one year.[11] In return for this immediate financial support Reid Newfoundland placed the management of the railroad in the hands of a joint

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[9]S.J.R. Noel, Politics in Newfoundland (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 151.

[10]R.M. Elliott, "Newfoundland Politics in the 1920s: The Genesis and Significance of the Hollis Walker Enquiry," in Newfoundland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Essays in Interpretation, ed. James Hiller, and Peter Neary (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 185.

[11]James K. Hiller, "The Newfoundland Railway, 1881-1949," Newfoundland Historical Society, Pamphlet, No. 6, (1981), 22.

commission of government and Company representatives, headed by R.C. Morgan of the CPR.[12] For Reid Newfoundland this development was one phase in the Company's long range plans to rid itself of the responsibility for the transinsular railway. Although there had been unprecedented demand for the railroad during the war, it was becoming increasingly obvious that the Reid empire was a corporate "house of cards" liable to topple without some adjustment in the terms of its original mandate. Therefore the Company was anxious to shed the burden of its contractual commitments to the Island's transportation system and instead concentrate on more promising resource-based projects, such as plans for a pulp and paper mill on the colony's west coast.[13] To this end Reid Newfoundland had actively pursued several options to divest itself of its major service industry holdings.[14] One scheme envisioned

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[12]"Report of R.C. Morgan, Esq., on Railway Operation in Newfoundland," 20 January 1922. Journal of the House of Assembly, 24 (3) 1922, Appendix, 110-36.

[13]For a discussion of Reid Newfoundland's investment plans on the west coast of the Island see, J.K. Hiller, "Newsprint Politics: The Newfoundland Pulp and Paper Industry, 1915-1939," unpublished research paper, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1986.

[14]PANL, RNCP, Correspondence Box 7 (1915-1917), Letter from H.D. Reid to Gunn Richards Ltd., Montreal, 15 November 1917. Reid Newfoundland Company had ongoing discussions with government officials regarding the purchase of the Company's assets of the St. John's Light and Power Company starting in 1917. The Light and Power Company owned and operated the city's streetcars and provided the city's hydro-electricity.

selling off the railway to Canadian interests as part of an intricate confederation agreement.

Throughout the war years and into the 1920s Reid Newfoundland had continued to work towards the expansion of its resource and land claims, while backing away from the sector which had first brought the corporation national prominence. After constant demands for ever greater railroad subsidies and operational concessions, the Company finally reneged on its railway contracts. In 1923, under the terms of the Railway Settlement Act, the Reid Newfoundland Company "retired absolutely from all transportation (including express) operations in, from and to the Colony and from the docking business in Newfoundland."[15] In accordance with the colony's political traditions, this release was not secured without considerable political intrigue.[16] As a result, Reid Newfoundland was freed from the constraints of its contractual obligations, but to no avail. Financially weakened, and operating in a severely depressed economic climate, the Company gambled on promoting two massive resource development schemes only to sink into receivership in 1931. Two years later when the Amulree Commission

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[15] Amulree Report, 67.

[16] In order to secure the success of the Humber River project the Squires government was forced to provide the Reid Newfoundland Company with a lenient release from their contractual obligations to the railroad. See, Hiller, "Newsprint Politics," 12-13.

released its report on the colony's economy it was calculated that the railway had cost an estimated $42,500,000 (between 1875 and 1932) of which $39,500,000 had been provided from loans. The railway had contributed "over one-third of the public debt of the Island."[17] The cautionary words of nineteenth-century merchants regarding the railway and the probability that it would result in confederation with Canada would soon be realized. For the Reids and their Company, the major beneficiaries of this grand scheme, the railroad had offered the opportunity to wield enormous power and influence over the Newfoundland political economy for some 40 years.

In St. John's itself the collapse of the national economy quickly translated into factory closings and serious losses for retail business. In his regular dispatch to the British Colonial Office for fall 1920, Governor Alexander Harris expressed his growing concerns for the colony:

> At the present time there is no question that business on Water Street is extremely restricted. There is a general sense of doubt and insecurity which according to good information is more marked than it has been for five and twenty years or perhaps even within business recollection.[18]

The list of manufacturing industries announcing that

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[17] Amulree Report, 67-68.

[18] Great Britain. Colonial Office (C.O.) 194/296, Harris to Milner, 30 September 1920.

operations would be reduced to "short time," or temporarily closed altogether, reached alarming proportions. Plants that manufactured products ranging from durable goods, such as footwear, to fresh foods, such as breads and biscuits, indicated a serious loss in sales.[19] The economic depression continued as more factories reduced their payrolls forcing still more workers into the ranks of the unemployed. Retail store clerks along Water Street soon found themselves without jobs as the unemployed could not hope to sustain the market for manufactured goods.[20] By 1921, several of the oldest and most established of St. John's factories closed their doors. The Newfoundland Knitting Company and the Imperial Tobacco Company both ceased operations throwing hundreds out of work, most of whom were women operatives.[21] Added to this list of business casualties was the Colonial Cordage Company, manufacturer of most of the fishing nets and twine used in the national fishing industry.[22] The city's waterfront, until recently a bustling centre of commercial activity, was now underutilized as waterfront workers waited in vain

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[19] Evening Telegram, 9, 13 November 1920.

[20] Ibid., 17 December 1920.

[21] PANL, P8/B/11, Newfoundland Board of Trade, Correspondence, Box 12, File 10. Letter from E.A. Payne to A. Harris, 12 May 1921.

[22] Evening Telegram, 10 June 1921.

for the next schooner or steamship.[23]

For the St. John's working class these developments had, in the space of eighteen months, placed in jeopardy all of the progressive changes secured during the latter stages of the war. As the Newfoundland Board of Trade dryly noted, the cost-of-living had dropped from its wartime ceiling, but these figures were easily outweighed for Newfoundland workers by the numbers of those out of work.[24] An editorial in the Evening Telegram offered a succinct appraisal, "Never in modern years has there been such unemployment and hard times as the past fall and present winter."[25] The plight of these unemployed was mirrored in the demand for charitable support which rose almost 75 per cent from the winter of 1920.[26] Those workers seeking jobs outside St. John's in the pulp and paper operations in communities such as Badger, Grand Falls, or in the Bell Island iron ore mines, found these avenues closed as these industries curtailed their production.[27] Traditional emigration to Cape Breton and

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[23]Ibid., 19 November 1921.

[24]PANL, P8/B/11, File 2, Newfoundland Board of Trade, 14 January 1921.

[25]Evening Telegram, 24 February 1921.

[26]PANL, GN 1/3/A, File 33, Governor's Office. Miscellaneous Despatches and Local Correspondence, 19 May 1921.

[27]Evening Telegram, 14 September 1921.

the "Boston States" of New England was also sharply reduced as Canadian and American immigration authorities impeded the regular influx of "sojourning" Newfoundlanders.[28] But not all workers sought to leave the Island to seek an improvement in their situations as many instead chose to stay and fight. With this premature onslaught of the "Great Depression" in Newfoundland came a series of bitterly contested labour struggles, fought both by craftsworkers and the unskilled, in an attempt to maintain their way of life.

Prior to the spring 1921 wave of strike activity which was to characterize the worker's efforts to retain their livelihood, a new labour group was formed to represent the concerns of the city's jobless. Known as the Unemployed Workers' Committee, the group was organized by St. John's labour leaders, including prominent representation from the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association.[29] On 18 April NIWA Executive Committee member Edward J. Whitty and NIWA Ladies' Branch president Julia Salter Earle were among the group which addressed an

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[28]Peter Neary, "Canadian Immigration Policy and the Newfoundlanders, 1912-1939," Acadiensis, 11, 2 (Spring 1982), 69-83.

[29]The Unemployed Workers' Committee was an ad hoc organization of labour groups, religious and social service representatives formed in spring 1921. See also, PANL, 1/3/A, Files 20-32 (1921).

overflow crowd of city workers.[30] The new Committee sought to draw the attentions of municipal councilors and MHAs to the pressing need for sufficient funding for relief projects to supply work for able-bodied men and women. This lobbying effort met with some success as the government allocated $150,000 for relief work and instituted a temporary employment bureau for those seeking such relief.[31] But such funding was not forthcoming until city labourers gave some indication of their determination to be treated fairly. A large delegation of unemployed citizens stormed the House of Assembly and demanded that Prime Minister Squires take up his promises to aid the destitute. William Smith, a Canadian government official conducting business in St. John's and present in the House at the time, described the protest:

> Some thousand or more strikers gathered in front of the legislative building, and when the house opened, as many as could find room crowded into the galleries. Three of their leaders addressed the Premier in the chamber, denouncing him for his conduct towards them, and demanding that their requests should be conceded.... The whole town was in a state of disorder.[32]

This was only to be the beginning of an intense period of

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[30] Evening Telegram, 19 April 1921.

[31] Ibid., 26 April 1921.

[32] E.R. Forbes, ed., "Newfoundland Politics in 1921: A Canadian View," Acadiensis, 9, 1 (Autumn 1979), 95-103.

protest during the following year as unionists launched a series of major strikes.

In May 1921, St. John's longshoremen struck in protest over a decision by the city's Employers' Protective Association to reduce waterfront wages by up to 23 per cent.[33] After the merchants backtracked on a temporary settlement, a second strike ensued and this involved violent confrontations between union workers and strikebreakers.[34] So charged was the atmosphere in the city that sailors from two British warships in port were paraded along Water Street "to impose a check on possible riots."[35] The fact that a powerful and influential union such as the LSPU was ready to accept significant wage cuts in return for continued work is indicative of the seriousness of this economic crisis. St. John's craftsworkers joined the May protests when members of the International Typographical Union struck city dailies when the newspapers refused to consider a new contract that would provide a closed shop and a 44-hour week.[36] The printers

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[33]The Employers' Protective Association was formed in 1914 specifically to combat the powerful LSPU.

[34]PANL, P/8/B/11, Box 13, File 13, Newfoundland Board of Trade, Correspondence, 1921.

[35]Forbes, "Newfoundland Politics in 1921," 96-97.

[36]Interview with Albert J. Shapter by Rolf Hattenhauer, 13 May 1967, Memorial University Folklore and Language Archives (MUNFLA), tape C-7223, Shapter's comments may indicate the ITU executives in the United States failed to understand the severity of the economic

established a rival newspaper, the Daily Unionist, for the first month of the dispute in an attempt to publicize their arguments but employers, realizing that the local economy ensured a ready supply of replacement workers refused to alter their stand.[37] This impasse was never broken and in the following months and years printers and pressmen were forced to return to their jobs, or in the end to leave the Island.[38] The mood of protest was not confined to the capital city as papermill workers at Grand Falls staged a massive protest over wage cuts which continued for three months, finally ending in defeat for the unions as they were forced to accept their employer's

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downturn in Newfoundland, and by ordering the St. John's Local 703 to press for a 44-hour week, displayed an insensitivity to the needs of the local job-situation. In this regard, the ITU's activities in St. John's resemble the North American pattern of printers strikes in their battle to secure shorter working hours. See, Gregory S. Kealey, "Work Control, the Labour Process, and Nineteenth Century Canadian Printers," in On The Job: Confronting the Labour Process in Canada, ed. Craig Heron and Robert Storey (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), 89-92; For an analysis of the 1921 44-hour printers' strike in Toronto see, Sally F. Zerker, The Rise and Fall of the Toronto Typographical Union, 1832-1972: A Case Study in Foreign Domination (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 178-204; also on Toronto see, Richard Allen, The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 175-196.

[37] PANL, P5/18, Box 1, The Daily Unionist, 12 issues from 2 May 1921.

[38] As the printers' strike continued for many months, a large number of union members were forced to leave the Island in search of work. Shapter himself found work in Sydney, Halifax, New York City, and Waterbury, Connecticut.

original terms.[39] With one major loss following another, the prospect for Newfoundland workers looked bleak. This pattern of strike activity demonstrated the labour movement's determination to continue their struggles despite a disastrous economic collapse. The impressive solidarity exhibited by workers in these defensive battles was in many ways indicative of the residual strength of labour activism forged during the war years. Whether this strength could continue to be effective in times of economic retrenchment was something yet to be decided.

During the early 1920s the NIWA continued to press forward with its mandate of progressive social measures. Membership statistics are sketchy, but the Association did retain much of its membership in St. John's and in its three principal affiliated branches in Whitbourne, Grand Falls, and Port-aux-Basques. An account of the NIWA and it activities in the immediate postwar period, written in the 1930s, places membership at approximately 3,000 in 1921.[40] Contemporary newspaper references indicate the Association continued to hold regularly scheduled meetings, both for the general membership and for the Execu-

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[39] At Grand Falls, the striking unions were the International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite and Paper Mill Workers (Local 63), the International Brotherhood of Paper Makers (Local 88), and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (Local 1097).

[40] George H. Tucker, "The Old NIWA," in The Book of Newfoundland, vol. 1, ed. J.R. Smallwood (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937), 279-81.

tive Committee well into the 1930s. Alongside their involvement in the Unemployed Workers' Committee, the NIWA had representation on the Central Charitable Committee, a body consisting of religious, social, and labour organizations which administered to the needs of working-class relief projects.[41] Following the traditions established during the war years, the Association sustained its extensive lobbying practices in matters such as a department of labour, minimum wage legislation, and demands for increased tariff protection for local manufacturing industries.[42] In terms of the local labour movement, NIWA committee members proceeded with their plans to organize city unions into a local trades and labour council. There is some indication that draft proposals for a TLC constitution were distributed to participating unions during the summer and fall of 19[illegible].[43]

During the early stages of Newfoundland's economic crash one of the Association's most successful projects, the Consumer's Co-operative Society, remained a thriving

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[41] Ibid., The Central Charitable Committee was an ad hoc organization of labour groups, religious and social service representatives. See, PANL, P8/B/11, Box 13, File 15, December 1921.

[42] For example see, Evening Telegram, 14 February, 77 May 1921.

[43] Minutes of the International Typographical Union, Local 703, 19 July, 3, 24 October 1921. Located in the Rolf Hattenhauer Labour Collection, Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University.

operation. Launched in October 1918, the Society was an attempt to offer workers an alternative to shopping in retail stores owned by Water Street merchants.[44] Loosely modelled on the British Co-operative Association and the so-called "Rochdale System," the Co-operative Society was wholly owned and operated under the auspices of an elected committee drawn from NIWA members.[45] The venture was an immediate success, and in November 1919 the operation was expanded, while at the same time a healthy stock dividend was declared. Despite a financial statement to the Co-operative Society's 1921 annual meeting which described the operation as "doing well," the overall weakness in the St. John's local economy during this period conspired to force the business into bankruptcy by spring 1922.[46] The reason for this appears to have been the extensive expansion undertaken in the enthusiasm days of the project's early stages which left the co-operative vulnerable to the market collapse in the 1920s.[47] With

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[44]Evening Advocate (St. John's), 12 October 1918. The store sold general merchandise and foodstuffs.

[45]The Industrial Worker (St. John's), vol. 1, No. 1, 18 May 1918; Tucker, "The Old NIWA," 280-81.

[46]Evening Telegram, 30 March 1921.

[47]Some discussion has centred on the NIWA's choice of a manager for their co-operative store. Edward J. Whitty was the first man to fill this position, but contrary to some sources, Whitty was apparently experienced in the retail business and the store was successful until the most severe years of the depression of the 1920s.

the demise of the Co-operative Society in St. John's, working-class citizens lost a valuable support structure. The severe nature of the postwar depression had caught both government and social service officials ill-prepared to cope with the numbers of destitute families.

Gradually as the depression continued the vitality of the NIWA, and that of the St. John's labour movement in general, was drained with each additional year of unrelenting economic crisis. Although NIWA members attempted to continue their efforts for social reforms and the propagation of the industrial union concept, it was becoming clear that the situation called for pragmatic decisions designed to ensure the survival of the Association itself. The various shop committees that represented segments of craftworkers and factory operatives continued to meet with employers over contractual and shop-floor issues, but generally labour was no longer in a position to bargain effectively. The number of strike actions called against St. John's businesses fell drastically as workers were forced to fight defensive struggles to prevent the erosion of what they had won in the latter war years. In 1924, news of a series of major strikes connected with a large construction project to build a paper mill at Corner Brook served to draw the comparison between that region's economic activity and the relative

stagnation in St. John's.[48] The Humber strikes eventually involved several thousand workers most of whom were unskilled labourers.[49] In the capital, the NIWA still retained many of the skilled trades associated with the Newfoundland Railway. As the wave of union activity receded, the Association withdrew to its original source of inspiration amongst these craftsworkers.[50] Yet even here the influx of the international railway unions began to attract former NIWA members.[51]

In early 1925, one of the last flourishes of labour activism to be experienced during the 1920s occurred when another attempt was made to form an Island-wide labour organization. On 5 April news arrived in the capital city that a group of unionists in Grand Falls had organized a

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[48] Evening Telegram, 27 March, 13 April 1924.

[49] Newspaper sources indicate that the strike was generally unsuccessful and in the end the workers accepted the original terms. See, Evening Telegram, 19 July, 1, 2, 4 August 1924; Tensions between construction gang workers and their employers had been sparked by an earlier incident involving the death of young labourer which led to subsequent protests over working conditions. See, Malcolm MacLeod, "A Death at Deer Lake: Catalyst of a Forgotten Newfoundland Work Stoppage, 1924," Labour/Le Travail, 16 (Fall 1985), 179-191.

[50] Interview with Irving and Frank Fogwill by R. Hattenhauer, 10 July 1967, MUNFLA, tape C-7229. The Fogwills suggest that for a short period of time the NIWA coexisted with the international railway unions, but eventually the workers felt more secure in the railway brotherhoods.

[51] For a listing of the first group of international railway brotherhoods to enter Newfoundland, see chapter 3.

labour council with the intention of developing branch memberships throughout the colony. The founding resolution of this organization as outlined in its general mandate included vague statements suggesting that it was to encompass workers from all backgrounds in an effort to encourage co-operation in furthering the standards of the working class.[52] The following week newspapers in St. John's carried articles describing this new group, now formally known as the Newfoundland Federation of Labour.[53] Excited NIWA executives in St. John's wired their congratulations to the Grand Falls group and suggested that "many here are interested."[54] The impetus for the NFL was largely attributable to the organizing skills of young J.R. Smallwood who had been active in the papermill town of Grand Falls since returning to Newfoundland from the United States in February 1925.[55] Smallwood had parlayed a hugely successful drive to re-organize the strike-weakened International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite, and

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[52] Evening Telegram, 11 April 1925.

[53] Ibid., 13 April 1925.

[54] Ibid., George H. Tucker, then NIWA vice-president, writing to the Grand Falls union leaders.

[55] Interview with Cyril Strong by R. Hattenhauer, 13 May 1967, MUNFLA, tape C-7223; Richard Gwyn, Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), 37; J.R. Smallwood, I Chose Canada: The Memoirs of the Honourable Joseph R. "Joey" Smallwood (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973), 152-54.

Paper Mill Workers.[56] As further details of the NFL reached St. John's unions many considered this movement to be labour's best opportunity to re-capture the vitality of the World War I years and that era's move towards industrial unionism. By the end of April, meetings were held in St. John's to affiliate city unions with the Federation. The list of organizations willing to join this new group provides some indication of the desire to maintain some form of collective activity during these years of economic depression. These included representatives from the postal workers, printers, carpenters and joiners, truckmen, telegraphers, and finally both the LSPU and NIWA.[57] This rush to affiliate with the NFL also suggests just how weakened was the city's union movement, for between themselves the LSPU and NIWA had represented the bulk of organized labour during the war years. Both had shared a formidable reputation for their willingness to undertake job actions to help instigate changes in the work place and the introduction of progressive social reform. In this regard the Newfoundland Federation of Labour followed the examples of the longshoremen and industrial workers as the new organization called for increased inter-union co-operation in order to develop an

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[56]Gwyn, Unlikely Revolutionary, 37-38.

[57]Evening Telegram, 29 April, 9 May 1925. The motion to join with the NFL passed unanimously, "at the best attended meeting for some years."

effective lobby group which would speak for the Island's working class.[58] Further support for this notion was gained when Julia Salter Earle led her NIWA Ladies' Branch into the Federation.[59] Now the NFL could claim an impressive cross section of workers drawn from an extensive range of occupational backgrounds.[60]

With such a dramatic alignment of union organizations behind the Federation the movement appeared poised to have a significant influence on future developments. Yet the NFL soon fell victim to its own initial success. The Federation lacked sufficient long-range planning and questions remain as to the leadership it attracted. Confusion also remains as to whether the NFL was able to take advantage of the experienced labour organizers in St. John's as it may have largely depended on the talents of activists recruited outside the capital.[61] Also of primary importance was the extremely marginal nature of

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[58] Ibid., 1 May 1925.

[59] Ibid., 4, 7 May 1925.

[60] One of Smallwood's NFL organizing trips to talk to miners on Bell Island was reported in the One Big Union Bulletin (Winnipeg), 21 May 1925. The article was entitled "Another Chapter of Besco Serfdom."

[61] Smallwood's temperamental personality had caused some friction during this brief tenure as an editor of The Industrial Worker in fall 1919. Perhaps this animosity had some influence of the lack of co-operation between Grand Falls and St. John's. Further research is needed to clarify the nature of the NFL, as yet little has surfaced on this group.

the improvement in the Newfoundland economy in 1925. For a brief period in 1924-1925 there was an upswing in employment statistics which reflected several major construction projects in St. John's and Corner Brook.[62] Improvements to the mainline railway tracks outside of the capital combined with jobs related to harbour improvements and the construction of the Newfoundland Hotel removed many from the unemployed lists, and this translated into a more optimistic mood amongst labour groups.[63] But this flurry of economic activity did not signal any sustained period of growth and once these projects were complete the numbers of jobless again rose dramatically. The collapse of the Newfoundland Federation of Labour in its first year is perhaps largely attributable to the general weakness in the Island's economy as it returned to a state of stagnation.

The demise of the Newfoundland Federation of Labour in many ways signified the last major attempt to form a collective organization during the 1920s, for nearly a decade would pass before labour could realistically make such a move again. Frustrated by the NFL's failure, St. John's members of the NIWA retreated back to the source of

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[62]The Corner Brook paper mill was under construction during 1924-1925.

[63]Nancy Forestell, "Working Women in St. John's," M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, forthcoming 1987, 28-43.

their original strength, amongst the craftsworkers employed in the railway operations. Although weakened by defections to the international railway unions now prominent on the Island, the Association continued to represent its six core unions, the blacksmiths, boilermakers, machinists, tinsmiths, pipefitters, and car shop employees during a series of negotiations with government officials in charge of the Newfoundland Railway.[64] Throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s only sporadic notices appeared in St. John's newspapers indicating the NIWA's continued existence. In 1927 the Association appears to have spawned a new organization intended to continue with several NIWA functions, principally the re-establishment of a co-operative store in St. John's. Known as the Railway Employees' Welfare Association (REWA), it operated a retail co-operative on Craigmillar Avenue in the city.[65] According to one past-president of the NIWA, the REWA continued to function for some twenty years serving employees of the railway shops.[66] In

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[64]Interview with Thomas C. Noel by R. Hattenhauer, 26 May 1967, MUNFLA, tape C-7232. Noel was the NIWA's third president from January 1920-February 1921. Noel also claims that the NIWA was able to co-exist with the international railway unions during the 1920s and early 1930s.

[65]Rolf Hattenhauer, "A History of the Labour Movement in Newfoundland," unpublished manuscript, Memorial University 1983, 358.

[66]Interview with T.C. Noel, MUNFLA, tape C-7232.

February 1932, the NIWA formally represented railway workers seeking to protest a series of wage reductions and layoffs ordered by the government.[67] Several years later in October 1935, at an organizing committee meeting of St. John's railway shopcraft workers, references to the NIWA's legacy were recorded. The committee chairman Walter Sparks, an individual who would soon play an important role in the renaissance of the Newfoundland labour movement, paid tribute to the NIWA as the founding organization of the Island's industrial work force.[68] The Association continued to survive during the 1930s, but its membership had dwindled to a handful of workers. In May 1941, the NIWA sold its St. John's offices located at 11 Hamilton Street.[69] Two years later the organization officially filed for dissolution with the government.

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[67]Interview with Arch Lush and Ron Brake by R. Hattenhauer, 18 May 1967, MUNFLA, tape C-7226. Lush and Brake claimed that railway workers would join the NIWA to obtain help in their contract negotiations, only to leave the Association after an agreement was reached.

[68]Minutes of the Organizing Committee of Railway Shopcrafts, 8 October-12 November 1935. Located in the Rolf Hattenhauer Labour Collection, Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University. This group eventually joined the International Association of Machinists as "Cabot" Lodge 1237. The meetings were held in the "REWA Rooms."

[69]Interview with A. Lush and R. Brake, MUNFLA, tape C-7226. Lush and Brake said that seven members remained by 1941 and that money from NIWA properties was distributed to local orphanages in St. John's. The Association had opened these offices in March 1919.

* * * *

For many years the well-documented activism of Canada's western provinces and the Ontario-Quebec heartland have enjoyed centre stage in labour history. As intensive research is undertaken in Atlantic Canada, historians are beginning to appreciate that the working-class experience in the East, comparatively unique in some ways, does indeed share certain fundamental features with our nation's more celebrated regions. The emergence of the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association corresponds with an efflorescence of labour and working-class activism which was evident both in Newfoundland and throughout the Western world. The activities that centred upon the World War I period were the culmination of one of the most seminal eras in the expression of class-conscious protest. In Newfoundland, the years between 1880 and the early 1920s represent one of the Island's critical periods of labour activism, a time when the movement came of age. During the war years, St. John's labour leaders coalesced to form an association which attracted widespread participation, not only from other St. John's workers, but the enthusiastic support of working people from across the Island.

From its modest beginnings the NIWA developed to become one of the key working-class movements in New-

foundland. The Association outlined an ambitious mandate of political and social reforms intended to redress the severe privations which working-class Newfoundlanders had long suffered. World War I was undoubtedly the catalyst for these events, yet the NIWA grew out of a tradtion of resistance which retained a continuity linking the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Drawing upon remembered struggles of earlier eras, the NIWA passed its influence onto a new period of labour activism beginning in the mid 1930s and leading to the formation of the Newfoundland Federation of Labour. As the story of these labour movements are explored Newfoundland workers will receive their rightful recognition in North American labour history. Whether workers were newly-arrived immigrants from the Russian Steppes or fifth-generation Newfoundlanders, their desires and aspirations to earn a decent living and to be accorded the respect owing to society's producers were essentially the same. When circumstances forced these people to rise up and demand justice, they did so across the land and this expression of class-conscious struggle to win a better life for themselves and their families knew no geographic limits.

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APPENDIX 1
St. John's Labour Force

Occupation	1901 Number	1901 Per Cent	1911 Number	1911 Per Cent	1921 Number	1921 Per Cent
Clergy	36	0.5	36	0.3	43	0.3
Teachers	125	1.6	226	1.8	251	1.9
Lawyers	52	0.6	46	0.4	43	0.3
Doctors	26	0.3	37	0.3	27	0.2
Merchants and Traders	138	1.8	350	3.0	306	2.3
Office and Shopworkers	1103	15.0	2684	21.0	2920	22.0
Government Service	318	4.2	459	3.6	512	3.9
Farmers	198	2.6	164	1.3	104	0.8
Fishermen and Others who Cultivate Land	11	0.1	167	1.3	171	1.3
Mechanics	1059	14.1	2359	18.0	2248	17.0
Males Catching and Curing Fish	85	1.1	341	2.6	269	2.0
Females Curing Fish	19	0.2	39	0.3	103	0.8
Lumbering	4	0.05	0	0	3	0.02
Mining	9	0.1	13	0.7	0	0
Factory and Workshop	299	4.0	993	7.7	990	7.5
Otherwise Employed[a]	4023	54.0	5009	39	5313	40.2
	7505	100	12923	100	13213	100

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1901, 1911, 1921.

[a] "This category likely included workers in a variety of pesonal service occupations and in the transportation, communication and construction industries. See Alexander, "Traditional Economy," p.68.

APPENDIX 2

Breakdown of labour strength at Reid Newfoundland Company:

2847 Total workers were employed at Reid in May 1918

242	-	Dock shops
133	-	Street railway/Electric light co.
22	-	General stores and Water St. stores
23	-	Express Dept.
118	-	Car Shops
114	-	Locomotive Shops
72	-	Freight Shed (St. John's)
155	-	Round Houses
121	-	Railway Clerks and Dispatchers
30	-	Bridge and Trestle workers
6	-	News Agents
8	-	Water Service
21	-	Waiters and Cooks, Porters
8	-	Car repairs on road
104	-	Labourers at terminals
10	-	Telegraph Repairers
4	-	Carpenters
215	-	Steamer Crews
184	-	Agents and operators
564	-	Section Men
275	-	Extra Men
126	-	Conductors and Trainmen
122	-	Drivers and Firemen
50	-	Workers at Coal Brook Mine
120	-	Argentia Branch construction workers
2847		Total

Source: PANL, P7/8/19, RNCP, Files 365-410.

APPENDIX 3

Retail Price Comparisons, 1914 and 1919

		1914	1919
Tea	(per lb.)	$0.04	$0.70
Sugar	"	.06	.13
Butter	"	.25	.48
Cheese	"	.24	.52
Rolled Oats	"	.04	.18
Ham	"	.25	.50
Bacon	"	.35	.90
Beef	"	.20	.50
Mutton	"	.20	.50
Veal	"	.20	.50
Pork	"	.20	.45
Cabbage	"	.04	.20
Potatoes	(per barrel)	2.50	5.00
Turnips	"	1.80	3.00
Bread	(per loaf)	.06-.10	.13-.15
Eggs	(per doz.)	.35	.90
Molasses	(per gal.)	.60	1.40
Kerosene	"	.24	.40
Coal	(per ton)	6.00	17.00
Boots	(men's)	4.50	7.50

Source: PANL, GN 13/1 (Box 155), Newfoundland Constabulary, Inspector General's Office

APPENDIX 4

Wage Comparisons, 1914 and 1919

		1914	1919	
Carpenters	(per day)	$2.50	$4.00	
Masons	"	4.00	6.00	
Ships Carpenters	"	2.50	4.00	
Plumbers	"	2.00	4.00	
Coopers	"	2.40	3.20	
Tinsmiths	"	2.50	3.50	
Plasterers	"	4.00	5.00	
Blacksmiths	(1st class)	3.00	5.00	
"	(2nd class)	2.00	4.50	
"	(3rd class)	1.50	3.80	
Printers		1.80-2.00	3.00-4.00	
Teamsters				
(single team, per week)		7.00	15.00	(Lesters)
"	"	7.00	17.00	(Knowlings)
"	"	7.00	14.00	(Ayre & Sons)
"	"	7.00	17.50	(Harvey & Co.)
"	"	8.00	14.00	(McMurdo)
"	"	8.00	17.00	(Campbell)
"	"	8.00	17.00	(Marshall)

Source: PANL, GN 13/1 (Box 155) Newfoundland Constabulary, Inspector General's Office.

APPENDIX 5

Government Revenue, Expenditure and Newfoundland Public Debt, 1914-15 to 1918-19

Year	Revenue	Expenditure	Public Debt
1913-14	$3,618,329.00	$3,920,178.00	$30,450,765.27
1914-15	3,950,790.00*	4,008,622.00	31,454,678.45
1915-16	4,600,271.00	4,110,885.00	34,489,665.60
1916-17	5,206,647.00	4,554,890.00	34,489,765.60
1917-18	6,540,082.00	5,369,454.00	34,489,955.60
1918-19	9,535,725.00	6,766,430.00	42,032,785.60
1919-20	10,597,561.00	9,247,006.00	43,033,035.60
1920-21	8,438,039.00	12,709,513.00	43,032,785.00
1921-22	8,269,680.00	10,080,909.00	49,033,035.00
1922-23	8,876,772.00	10,145,580.00	55,033,035.00
1923-24	8,401,669.00	10,028,656.00	60,451,754.00

*Figure includes a $500,000 Bank of Montreal loan and $198,158 taken from the Reserve Trust Fund.

Source: McDonald,, "Coaker and the FPU," pp.361-62.

APPENDIX 6

Imports/Exports/Total volume Foreign Trade, 1914-15 to 1918-19

Year	Imports	Exports	Total Foreign Trade	Index (%)
1913-14	$15,193,000	$15,134,000	$30,327,000	204.7*
1914-15	12,350,000	13,136,000	25,486,000	172.0
1915-16	16,427,000	18,969,000	35,386,000	238.8
1916-17	21,318,000	22,381,000	43,699,000	294.9
1917-18	26,892,000	30,153,000	57,045,000	385.0
1918-19	33,297,000	36,784,000	70,081,000	473.0
1919-20	40,533,000	34,865,000	75,398,000	508.9
1920-21	28,909,000	22,441,000	51,350,000	346.6
1921-22	18,209,000	19,478,000	37,687,000	253.4
1922-23	19,321,000	20,956,000	40,277,000	271.8
1923-24	27,677,000	21,071,000	48,748,000	327.0

*Base year 1888.

Source: McDonald, "Coaker and the FPU," p.363.

APPENDIX 7

Salt Cod Fish Exports (Quantity and Price), 1914-1918

Year	Quintals	Index (%)	Export Value per Quintal	Index (%)
1913	1,247,234	116.7*	$5.80	120.6
1914	1,094,122	102.4	6.70	139.3*
1915	1,421,014	133.0	7.31	152.0
1916	1,568,055	146.8	8.21	170.2
1917	1,821,206	170.4	10.33	214.8
1918	1,681,730	157.4	14.46	300.6
1919	1,787,849	167.3	12.67	263.4
1920	1,363,787	127.6	9.77	203.1
1921	1,592,046	149.0	7.34	152.6
1922	1,483,087	139.7	6.86	142.6
1923	1,264,668	118.4	6.78	141.0
1924	1,165,097	109.0	8.96	186.3

*Base year 1876.

Source: McDonald, "Coaker and the FPU," p.366.