

Representative Government

The first general election for representative government was held in 1832. How do you think candidates campaigned for the election?

Why is representative government important?

Introduction

In Europe and the Americas, the late 1700s and the 1800s saw some movement toward democracy. “The American Declaration of Independence” in 1776, “The French Declaration of the Rights of Man” in 1791, and several revolutions in Latin America were evidence of the growing conviction that humans should be “citizens” rather than “subjects” of a monarchy without any say in their future. This was especially true after the Napoleonic Wars. Some residents of Newfoundland and Labrador also held this belief.

The Move Toward Representative Government

Along with a growing resident population came a need for a better system of governance than that provided previously by fishing admirals and naval governors. The British, recognizing that Newfoundland was no longer a collection of work camps, appointed a year-round governor in 1817. In 1825, colonial status was granted to Newfoundland. This meant that a civil governor administered the colony with an appointed council.

However, reformers felt that even more reforms were needed. They argued that they should be able to elect representatives to a legislature that would make laws to represent their interests. This kind of representative government was the system in place elsewhere in nearby Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Upper and Lower Canada. Two of these reformers were William Carson, a Scottish doctor and businessman who had settled near St. John’s, and Patrick Morris, a recent immigrant from Ireland to St. John’s and President of the Benevolent Irish Society. Carson and (later) Morris, among others, blamed many of Newfoundland’s problems upon a “**despotic**” British administration and argued that representative institutions would help bring about greater prosperity.

Merchants were divided on the issue. Most of the merchants who dominated the local economy opposed



3.113 Sir Thomas Cochrane (1789-1872)
Governor of Newfoundland from 1825 to 1834

The British, recognizing that Newfoundland was no longer a collection of work camps, appointed a year-round governor in 1817.

the granting of representative government. They argued that the cost of a legislature would have to be borne by taxes – which would raise the price of producing fish and hurt business. Other merchants supported representative government because they felt a local legislature could prevent the British government from raising taxes for public works that did not benefit the fishery.

Experiencing The Arts

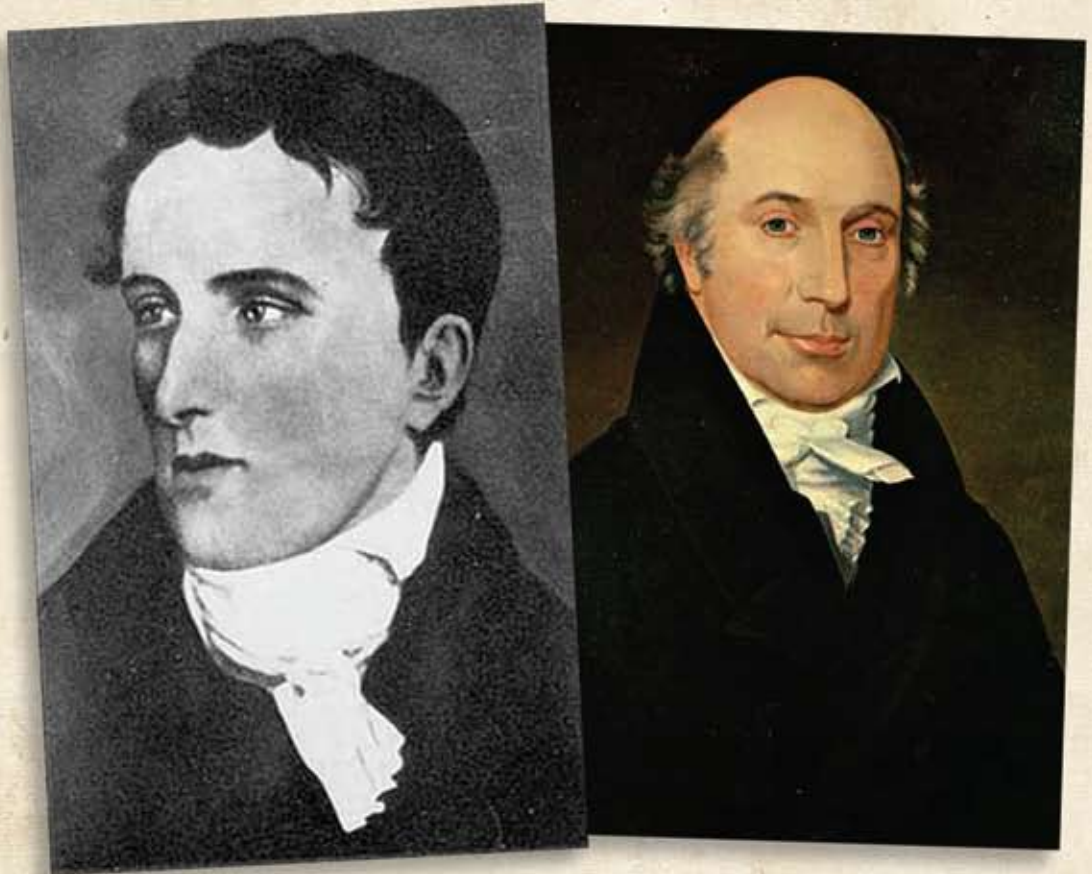
Use information from this section to create a comic art essay of 10-20 frames that explores changes in government during the 1800s. Be sure to identify

examples of cause and consequence, and continuity and change. Add this to your profile.

3.114 Political reformers

Carson (far right) published the first political protest pamphlets in St. John's, in which he attacked the government for abusing individual liberties and demanded that an elected assembly be established in Newfoundland.

Morris (right) argued that the island fully deserved institutions consistent with the needs of a civilized society: the old system of naval government was no longer sustainable in what had become a permanently settled colonial society.



**This was the same year that the right to vote was extended to many British male citizens and the House of Commons was reformed.*

The Structure of Representative Government

The bill to grant representative government to Newfoundland was passed by the British Parliament in 1832.* The British government saw the creation of a Newfoundland legislature as something that would benefit the colony and reduce British expenditures there. Proponents for representative government believed it would develop the colony's resources, eliminate poverty, and ensure elected representatives had control over the way government raised revenue.

The first general election was held in the fall of 1832, and the new system came into effect in 1833. Under representative government there were two chambers: an elected lower house known as the House of Assembly; and an upper house or Legislative Council, whose members were appointed by the governor. There was no premier or prime minister, and members of the upper house held the

most important offices, such as Chief Justice and Colonial Treasurer.

Members of the lower house were elected by men, age 21 and older, who had occupied a house for one year prior to the election. Voters cast their vote in public, not by secret ballot as we do today. The elected house had 15 members representing nine districts. Some electoral districts were given more than one member in the interests of providing denominational balance. No districts existed along the French Shore, where permanent settlement was not officially allowed, or in Labrador and the sparsely populated interior regions of the island. The lower house's powers were limited, but as its assent to legislation (including measures dealing with the colony's finances) was essential, it did have some influence.

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

(1832-1855)

MONARCH

- head of government is the King or Queen
- monarch normally grants Royal Assent to the requests of British government

GOVERNOR

- appointed by the British government
- reported to the Colonial Office in London, England

British government could reject any legislation coming from Newfoundland.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

(Cabinet)

- appointed by Governor
- mainly consisted of members from Legislative Council
- along with the Governor, they were essentially "the government," assuming portfolios that ran various departments
 - drafted bills and sent them to Legislative Council for debate and approval

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

(Upper House)

- appointed by Governor
- most appointees were government officials, military officers, and influential citizens: lawyers, merchants, sea captains, etc.
- purpose was to debate and approve legislation
 - required to send bills to House of Assembly for debate and approval
 - sometimes referred to as the "Governor's Council"

JUDICIARY

- appointed by Governor
- chief justice, who was a member of Executive Council
- included supreme court (which went on circuit every summer to hear cases) and **magistrates' courts** (which dealt with minor offences)

CIVIL SERVICE

- very small as government assumed few responsibilities in this time period
- mostly concerned with financial issues, such as collecting import duties (the colonial government's primary source of income)

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

(Lower House)

- initially 15 members were elected from nine districts
- over time the number of members in the House changed in an effort to provide balance between Protestants and Catholics
- main role was to debate and approve bills sent from Legislative Council
 - if a bill was not approved this could create a crisis, making it difficult for government to work effectively, if at all
 - could introduce bills; if passed, the bill was sent to Legislative Council for approval

Unlike the House of Assembly, which represented the voting public, the Council was answerable to the British government and not to the people of Newfoundland.

ELECTORATE

- males, aged 21+ who had "occupied" a house for at least one year prior to the election

The main issue here was there were times when the House of Assembly was mostly Roman Catholic and the Legislative Council was Church of England, which created conflict along denominational lines.

Efforts of Representative Government

It is difficult now to realize how limited the influence of government was in the 1830s and how little its actions affected the everyday lives of its citizens. Until the Colonial Building was completed in 1850, the legislature had no permanent home and met in a succession of rented and borrowed rooms.

The main expenditures were courts and jails, the upkeep of public buildings, the expenses of the legislature, and relief to the poor. A tiny amount spent on roads and bridges comprised the transportation budget. Acts were also passed for the erection of lighthouses at various points along the coast. Although none of these public works were extensive, it was the first time that improvements such as these had been undertaken by the government. Health and education services, to the

extent that they were provided at all, were largely left in the hands of non-governmental bodies, particularly the churches. It was well into the twentieth century before government departments of education, health, and welfare were established.

Government departments, such as there were, covered justice and finance and little more. The whole civil service consisted of a few dozen officials in St. John's and a handful of outport magistrates and customs officers. Including part-time officers, the government employed perhaps a hundred people. There were no taxes and most government revenue came from customs import duties – although this only amounted to a few times the governor's annual salary.

3.116 Record of representative government expenditures in 1836
from the 1836 Blue Book

[30]

COMPARATIVE YEARLY STATEMENT

Specify each separate Head of Expenditure.	Expenditure 1836 in Pounds Sterling.			Expenditure 1837 in Pounds Sterling.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Civil Depart ^t . (Salaries)	5045	-	-	4975	-	-
(Conting ^t)	47	17	-	46	7	8
Customs Establishment	5011	7	9	4551	17	5
Judicial Depart ^t . (Salaries)	3010	-	-	4051	6	3
(Conting ^t)	1473	5	11	1536	12	9
Police & Magistrates	3150	-	-	1410	10	0
Religious & Charitable Depart ^t .	300	-	-	375	-	-
Legislative Department	1390	0	9	1253	11	11
Printing & Ad ^g & Stationery	302	15	-	376	14	1
Gen ^l Expenses	684	19	7	785	5	12
Coroners	126	8	-	132	10	7
Fuel & Light	203	18	7	192	3	2
Repairs of Court Houses & Gaol	617	4	-	289	10	1
Gov ^t Buildings & House	391	7	6	591	12	11
Relief of the Poor	662	0	8	591	16	6
Repairing & Making Roads	753	9	7	1245	-	-
Vaccination	4	4	3	499	4	3
Postages & other small bills	120	-	-	108	19	-
Redemption of Treasury Notes	-	-	-	4490	2	0
Votes for Individual & Special Services	361	18	5	397	13	2
Miscellaneous Contingencies	318	17	9	44	17	7
Use of Colonial Hotel	-	-	-	2300	-	-
Pensions & Gratifications	245	-	-	483	15	-
Votes in Aid of Public Institutions	530	-	-	-	-	-
Disbursements under "Vote" Act	1187	10	-	-	-	-
Typhoid	446	7	-	-	-	-
Erection of New Court House	1529	9	4	-	-	-
Taking the Census	500	-	-	-	-	-
Total	36019	18	6	34074	13	9

[31]

OF THE COLONIAL EXPENDITURE.

Increase in Pounds Sterling.			Decrease in Pounds Sterling.			Cause of Increase or Decrease.
£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
70	-	-	-	-	-	Increase of Governor's Salary
1	9	4	-	-	-	Additional Officers for Colonial Revenue
459	10	4	-	-	-	Salary of Judge of the Supreme Court paid in 1836, less paid in 1837
-	-	-	11	6	3	Additional stipendary magistrates & constables
-	-	-	63	6	0	Catholic Bishops & Clergy increased pensions
1739	10	-	1597	6	0	
-	-	-	75	-	-	
136	8	10	-	-	-	
-	-	-	73	17	1	
-	-	-	100	5	10	Casual
-	-	-	6	2	7	do
11	15	5	-	-	-	
327	13	11	-	-	-	Some of the repairs actually provided for
-	-	-	200	5	5	Casual
70	4	2	-	-	-	
629	4	7	-	-	-	Provided for by an Act of the Legislature
-	-	-	495	-	-	

[31] OF THE COLONIAL EXPENDITURE.					
Increase in Pounds Sterling.			Decrease in Pounds Sterling.		
£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
70	-	-	-	-	-
19	4	-	-	-	-
459	10	4	-	-	-
-	-	-	11	4	6
-	-	-	63	6	40
1739	10	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	15	-	-
136	8	10	-	-	-
-	-	-	73	19	1
-	-	-	100	5	10
-	-	-	6	2	7
11	15	5	-	-	-
327	13	11	-	-	-
-	-	-	200	5	5
70	4	2	-	-	-
629	4	7	-	-	-
-	-	-	495	-	-

3.117 Ensuring safety at sea

The lighthouse at Cape Spear was built in 1836 with funds from representative government. Today it has been restored to its 1839 appearance.



The Problems with Representative Government

In theory, the representative government granted to the colonies was based on the British constitution. The idea was that the two houses would serve as a system of checks and balances, which would result in beneficial legislation. However, it did not work well in any of the British North American colonies. Elected Assembly members inevitably wanted more power, thinking they were the real government representing the people. Members of the appointed upper house feared "mob rule." They resisted any loss of power and frequently blocked measures perceived to hurt their interests.

In Newfoundland, most adult males were either fishers or merchants. Fishers were often illiterate* or had limited formal education. In the view of the Colonial Office, they were unsuitable to play a role in government. Meanwhile, merchants were mostly temporary residents, and tended to return to Britain. They were reluctant to support public works and services for residents that required taxes to be raised since this would affect their profit margin. This frequently resulted in division between the Council and the Assembly.

Both religion and ethnicity were factors as important as class in Newfoundland politics of this period. During this time there was much prejudice both in Britain and Newfoundland and Labrador, between English and Irish, Protestants and Roman Catholics. In particular the Irish resented the terms of the Act of Union, in which only members of the Church of England were permitted to become members of the Parliament of Ireland (though the great majority of the Irish population were Roman Catholic, and there were large numbers of Presbyterians in Ulster). In general, British legislation was hostile to the civil and political rights of Roman Catholics.

This tension carried over into the two houses of government in Newfoundland. Members of the appointed upper house were almost always members of the Church of England, while the elected lower house included significant numbers of Roman Catholics and Methodists. Frequently the upper house was accused of **patronage**, making decisions that favoured those associated with the Church of England. This was resented by other denominations, and was especially the case among the Irish Roman Catholics, many of

them recent immigrants. (The Irish had struggled against the British government for Catholic **emancipation** in Ireland, which was granted in 1829.)

The election process was also problematic. Since there was no secret ballot, voters had to stand and be counted at polling stations. This provided opportunities for violence and intimidation. On several occasions, troops intervened when angry crowds confronted each other during elections.

Even between elections, religion and ethnicity played a role in politics. In a famous incident in 1835, Protestant newspaper editor Henry Winton, who had engaged in a campaign against priests' influence in politics, was assaulted by masked men and had his ears mutilated as retaliation for his newspaper's campaign.

*In this context, this term means that a person cannot read and/or write. However, fishers still had extensive knowledge related to their craft and with minimal tools led a self-sufficient life.

3.118 Influence of the press

A reward was offered for information on the assailants who had attacked newspaper editor Henry Winton.

PROCLAMATION.

By His Excellency HENRY PRESCOTT,
Esquire, Companion of the Most Hon-
(L.S.)-orable Military Order of the Bath,
H. PRESCOTT, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in
and over the Island of Newfound-
land and its Dependencies, &c.

WHEREAS on TUESDAY the 19th of this Instant
May, a most atrocious and diabolical outrage was com-
mitted by Four MEN, at present unknown, on the
Person of Mr.

H. WINTON

of St. John's, who was then on his way from Carbonear
to Harbor Grace in this Island. And Whereas it is no less especially necessary to the ends of Justice
than essential to the protection and safety of the lives of all Her Majesty's subjects, that the perpetrators
of this during outrage should be detected and brought to punishment: I do therefore call upon all Her
Majesty's faithful subjects to aid and assist Her Majesty's Officers in discovering and apprehending the
Persons concerned in perpetrating the aforesaid crime; and for the speedy detection of whom

I do hereby offer a REWARD of

**FIVE
HUNDRED
POUNDS, STG.**

to any Person or Persons (except the Person or
Persons who actually committed the said outrage,) who shall give such information as shall lead to the
Apprehension and Conviction of the Offenders. AND I DO ALSO PROMISE A

FREE PARDON

to the Person or Persons who (being an accomplice or accomplices, but not the actual perpetrator of the
said crime) shall give such information as aforesaid.

Given under my hand and seal at the Government House at St. John's in the aforesaid Island
the 26th day of May in the third year of Her Majesty's reign, and in the year of our Lord 1835

By His EXCELLENCY'S Command, **JAMES CROWDY, Secy.**

Printed by J. B. HURTON, Harbor Grace.



3.119 New House of Assembly, Newfoundland

This political cartoon by John Doyle was published as a broadsheet in London in 1832 by Thomas McLean in anticipation of the opening of the House of Assembly in Newfoundland the following year. Entitled "The Speaker Putting the Question," the cartoon portrays the Newfoundland Legislature as a pack of dogs. The speech balloon reads, "As many as are of that opinion say ... Bow! Of the contrary ... Wow! The Bows have it."

Attempts to Improve Governance

The Colonial Office began to consider ways to end the constant warfare between the elected Assembly and the appointed Council. Between 1842 and 1848 the Colonial Office tried a new experiment in representative government—an Amalgamated Assembly. The Assembly and Council were merged, with some elected members sitting in the same chamber with a number of appointed members. The two groups had to work together, but it did not join them together in any common cause; and since

the experiment was temporary, there was only a brief break from the political fighting that had made the first 10 years of representative government so difficult.

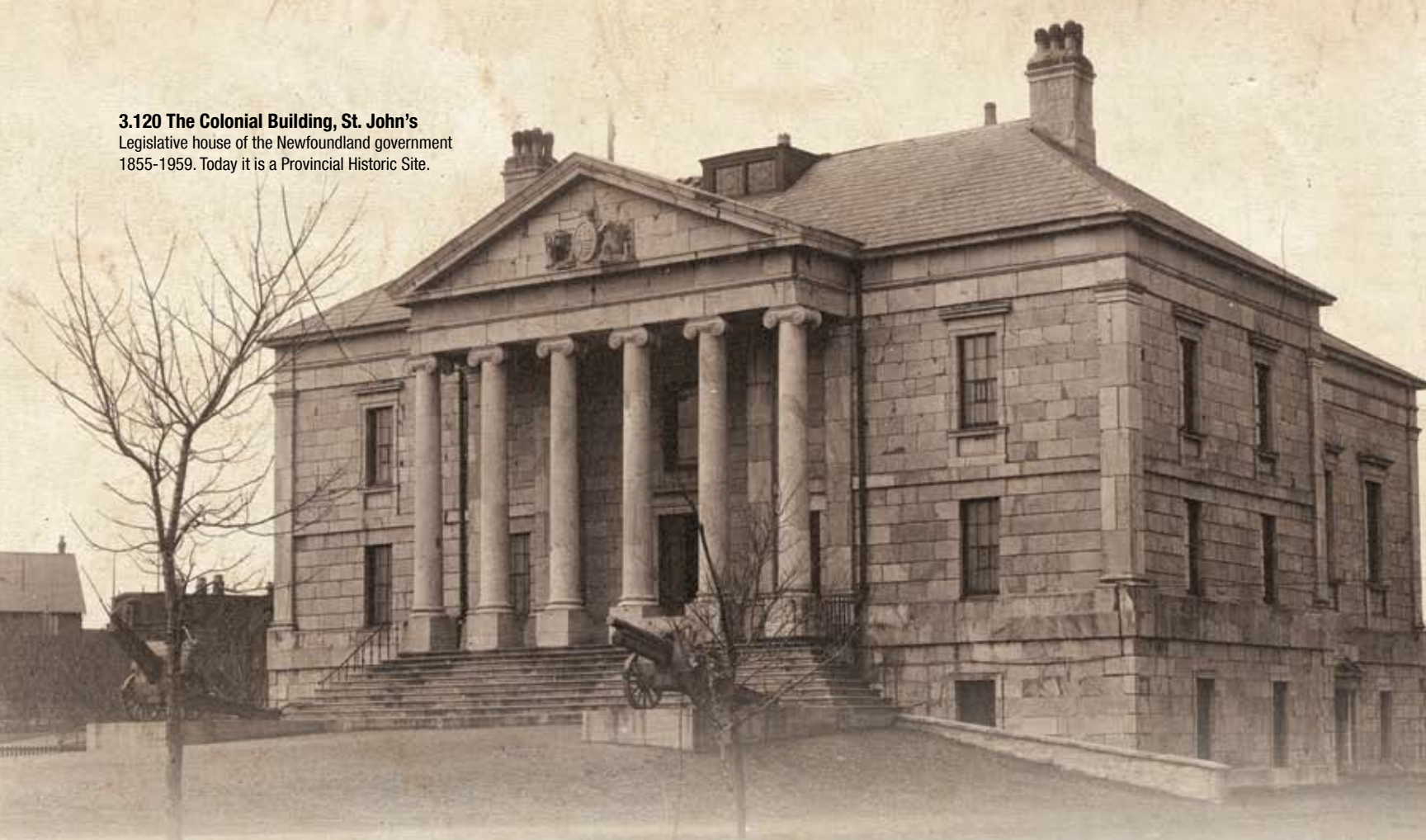
For a brief time, this approach worked, due mainly to the influence of Governor John Harvey. However, when Harvey finished his term as Governor, conflict again emerged. Around the same time another solution was being considered—responsible government.

Questions:

1. Individuals such as William Carson and Patrick Morris argued that an elected local government was necessary to represent the interests of Newfoundlanders. What might have been the three most significant issues a growing settler population would want a local government to address?
2. Some merchants argued that the cost of running a legislature would have to be funded by taxes, "which would raise the price of producing fish and hurt business." Many people today would say that there are too many taxes. Why is it necessary for governments to collect taxes?
3. In the view of the Colonial Office, fishers were not suitable to play a role in government. What arguments/evidence: (i) support this position, and (ii) refute it?
4. Newfoundland was part of a global imperial "system" with London as its centre. Newfoundlanders were proud to be part of the British Empire* and to fly the Union Jack, even if they did not always agree with British decisions concerning the colony. The House of Commons in London could reject legislation passed by the Newfoundland legislature. How could this have affected the colony?

*a.k.a. the "British World"

3.120 The Colonial Building, St. John's
Legislative house of the Newfoundland government
1855-1959. Today it is a Provincial Historic Site.



TOPIC 3.8

Responsible Government

During responsible government, politicians attempted to diversify the economy. Why would this be an important goal?

One of the initiatives of responsible government was the construction of a railway. Why are transportation infrastructures important?

Introduction

Responsible government was modelled on the British parliamentary system. The Executive Council (which today we call Cabinet) had to be drawn mostly from members of the political party holding the most seats in the elected House of Assembly. Most times, the leader of that party became the premier or prime minister.

The Structure of Responsible Government

The idea of responsible government, in some ways very similar to the system we use today, was proposed as a solution to the constant deadlocks in all settled

colonies between elected assemblies and appointed legislative councils. The Executive Council ("the government" or "cabinet") was to be drawn from the political party holding the most seats in the House of Assembly. The leader of that party then became "premier" or, after 1909 in Newfoundland, "prime minister." The Legislative Council became a separate but still appointed body, with the power to reject and review legislation.

Responsible government did not mean complete autonomy. The British government retained the final say on colonial legislation and on external affairs.

RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

(1855-1934)

MONARCH

- head of government is the King or Queen
- monarch normally grants Royal Assent to the requests of British government

GOVERNOR

- appointed by British government
- reported to the Colonial Office in London, England

The number of ministers grew over time; initially there were six departments: Attorney General, Colonial Secretary, Receiver General, Surveyor General, Solicitor General, President of the Legislative Council.

Most were from England, appointed without consultation with the colony. While viewed as a fairly important posting, it wasn't "high on the list" due to rate of pay and weather.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

(Cabinet)

- recommended by Premier; appointed by Governor
- most were members of House of Assembly; some were from Legislative Council
- assumed portfolios for various departments
- were responsible to House of Assembly
- drafted bills and sent them to House of Assembly for debate and approval
- from the 1860s, the custom was to ensure that all major denominations were represented

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

(Upper House)

- recommended by Premier; appointed by Governor
- members served for life, or until they resigned
- reviewed bills sent from House of Assembly; approval required for all bills
- seen as a body of "sober second thought"
 - could defeat or amend bills related to finances (until 1917)
- most appointees were influential citizens: lawyers, merchants, sea captains, etc.

JUDICIARY

- recommended by Premier; appointed by Governor
- included supreme court (which went on circuit every summer to hear cases) and **magistrates' courts** (which dealt with minor offenses)
 - it became custom to ensure that all major denominations were represented
- magistrates frequently dealt with other issues, such as poor relief and road works

No women were ever appointed.

CIVIL SERVICE

- expectations of government responsibilities changed over time
- consequently, the civil service grew as government assumed more duties; e.g., Department of Fisheries (1890s)

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

(Lower House)

- members elected (usually) every four years
 - number of seats changed over time; initially some districts had multiple members; by the 1920s trend was to have smaller districts with one representative
- legislation was introduced, debated, passed, and then sent to Legislative Council for approval
- elections normally held in fall after fishing season; House usually met in winter

The Newfoundland Constabulary was created in 1871. While peace officers are part of the civil service, their work helps ensure the presence of justice is maintained in the community. (However, many communities in this time period did not have a police presence.)

ELECTORATE

- males aged 21+ who "occupied" a house for one year prior to election
- women (until 1925), French Shore (until 1882), Labrador (until 1946) were excluded

The government normally sits on the right but in NL they sat on the left because that is where the main heating was located. This practice is still evident today.

Efforts were made after 1855 to ensure that the boundaries of districts were defined in such a way as to allow for denominational representation.

Early Governments

One of the first challenges facing the newly formed government was how to accommodate ethnic and religious differences. The population was divided along denominational and ethnic lines; most Roman Catholics were of Irish descent, while most Protestants were of English or Scottish descent. The push for responsible government had been driven by an alliance between the Roman Catholics, represented by the Liberal Party, and members of the Methodist Church. Both groups resented what they perceived as an unfair exclusion from power and therefore access to government jobs, which seemed to be dominated by members of the Church of England.

The first administrations under responsible government were Liberal, built on a Catholic-Methodist alliance, but by 1860 this coalition was falling apart. The largely Protestant Conservatives, who had opposed responsible government, took power in 1861 and began a process of accommodation with other groups and parties. This resulted in an informal but enduring **denominational compromise**, whereby seats in the house, government offices, judicial appointments, and grants for education were shared proportionally between Catholic, Church of England, and Methodist denominations. This compromise remained the unwritten rule in Newfoundland and Labrador politics for a century.



3.122 Philip F. Little (1824-1897)

Little was the leader of the Liberal Party in the 1850s, and the first premier of Newfoundland.

Sovereignty and Economic Development

During the first 50 years of responsible government there persisted two main areas of concern: **sovereignty** and a desire for economic development. Although Newfoundland was internally self-governing* from 1832, its relations with other countries were controlled by the British government. This was the case not only in Newfoundland, but for all British colonies. All initiatives from the colonies that related to international issues had to be approved by the Colonial Office, whose mandate was to consider issues in the larger context of the whole British Empire.

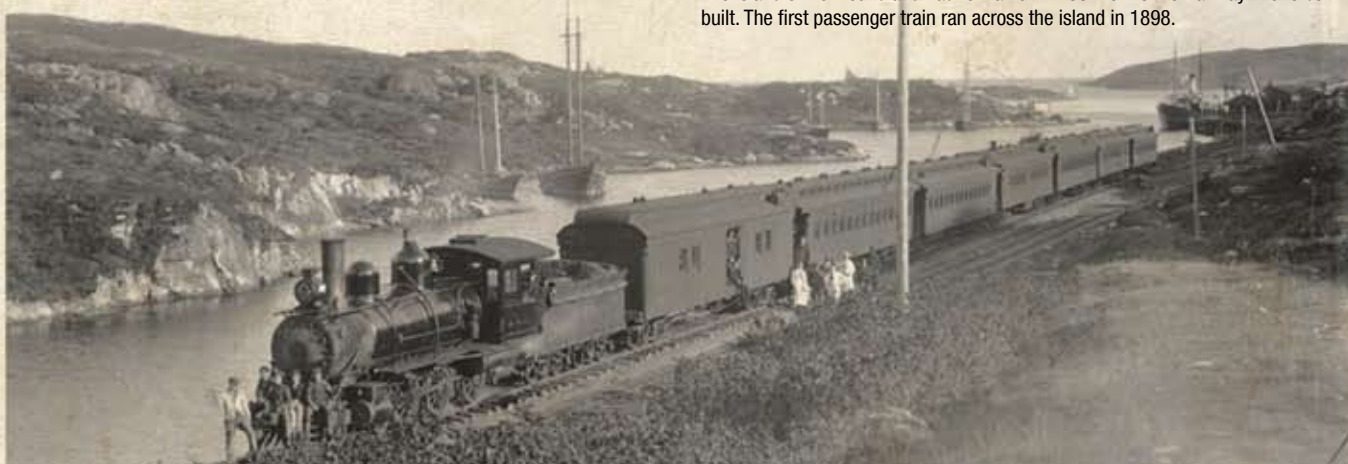
In relation to sovereignty, there were two matters where the government of Newfoundland wanted to exercise control: the French Treaty Shore and the negotiation of a trade agreement with the United States. These were significant areas from London's perspective, but approval

would be granted only if it served the interests of the British government. Although Newfoundland clearly desired greater autonomy in these matters, it remained staunchly loyal to Britain.

A second concern was economic development. Many people realized that dependence on the fishery was problematic and believed future growth should be based on the North American model. Many Newfoundlanders supported politicians who advocated economic diversification through such measures as the construction of a railway across the island. The Newfoundland government decided, after a bitter and divisive discussion, to build a narrow-gauge railway from St. John's to the west coast. It would be expensive, but its supporters argued that the line would promote land-based industries, firmly link the east and west coasts, and

3.123 Reid Newfoundland Company passenger train, c. 1900

The island of Newfoundland had to wait until 1882 for its first railway line to be built. The first passenger train ran across the island in 1898.



* although the Colonial Office had the power to overturn all legislation passed in the colonies

THE PUSH FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

The campaign for responsible government in Newfoundland was started by a coalition of Reformers – both Roman Catholic and Methodist – and some of the native-born. They felt that Newfoundland should enjoy the same constitutional status as other colonies, which began to receive responsible government in the late 1840s. They wanted elected Newfoundlanders, rather than Crown appointees, to set government policy. The reformers were opposed by the Tories and their allies, all of them Protestant, who feared both loss of office and a government dominated by Roman Catholics.

3.124 French fisherman, c.1900

In addition to its own territory at Saint-Pierre-Miquelon, France had fishing rights in Newfoundland along the French Treaty Shore, which between 1783 and 1904 extended from Cape St. John to Cape Ray. Because the Newfoundland government did not have control over international issues, any concerns it had over the French Treaty Shore had to go through the British Colonial Office.

better join Newfoundland with the mainland through a regular ferry service.

While the desire for economic development, along with the belief that the colony should have more control over its territory and resources, arose in the early days of self-government, they have remained important elements of political life to present times.

“... a railway was required in Newfoundland ... to bring us into closer contact with the civilization and superior advancement of the Continent ... the go-ahead America of to-day.”

— D.W. Prowse in *A History of Newfoundland from the English, Colonial, and Foreign Records*, 2nd edition, 1896

Questions:

1. What was the most significant difference between representative government and responsible government? Explain.
2. Economics continues to be a concern for all citizens. What economic issues affect the province today?

3.125 An editorial pushing for responsible government in *The Patriot*, July 13, 1850

connexion but a similar concession. The irresponsible system and the rule of our “seven Governors” must be given to “the moles and bats,” and to sustain our old affections for the British monarchy we must be permitted to enter upon the progressive system of entire self-government. All the resources of the country will then be in the people’s own hands, and all the institutions of the Colony will be improved, and purged of their corruptions. The fisheries now languishing for want of encouragement will be protected. Education will be advanced, and the Laws, codified and made to suit the exigencies of the people, will be so simplified that every man may be “his own lawyer.” But it is impossible to calculate the many blessings which will follow in the wake of Responsible Government in Newfoundland. Let the people act as we have pointed out in our last number, and before another General Election we shall possess the great boon for which all enlightened men are clamorous.



3.126 Fathers of Confederation (Quebec Conference)

TOPIC 3.9

Autonomy?

Newfoundland decided not to confederate with Canada in the 1800s. In what ways might this decision have affected the colony?

What do you think would have happened in Newfoundland and Labrador if, during the 1948 referendum, responsible government was the “winner” and not confederation?

Introduction

The question of whether to remain independent or join with other British North American colonies was an issue from 1864 to 1949. In 1864, two Newfoundland

delegates attended the Quebec Conference and signed the resolutions that became the foundation of the 1867 British North America Act. Although Newfoundland

3.127

A TIME OF DEBATE: *The confederation issue from 1864 to 1949*

1864-1869

Difficult economic times make the prospect of **confederation** with Canada an attractive option for some Newfoundlanders. However, a coalition of Roman Catholic Liberals and Conservative merchants – the former fearing a loss of power and the loss of a separate school system; the latter fearing increased taxation – help prevent the union.

1888

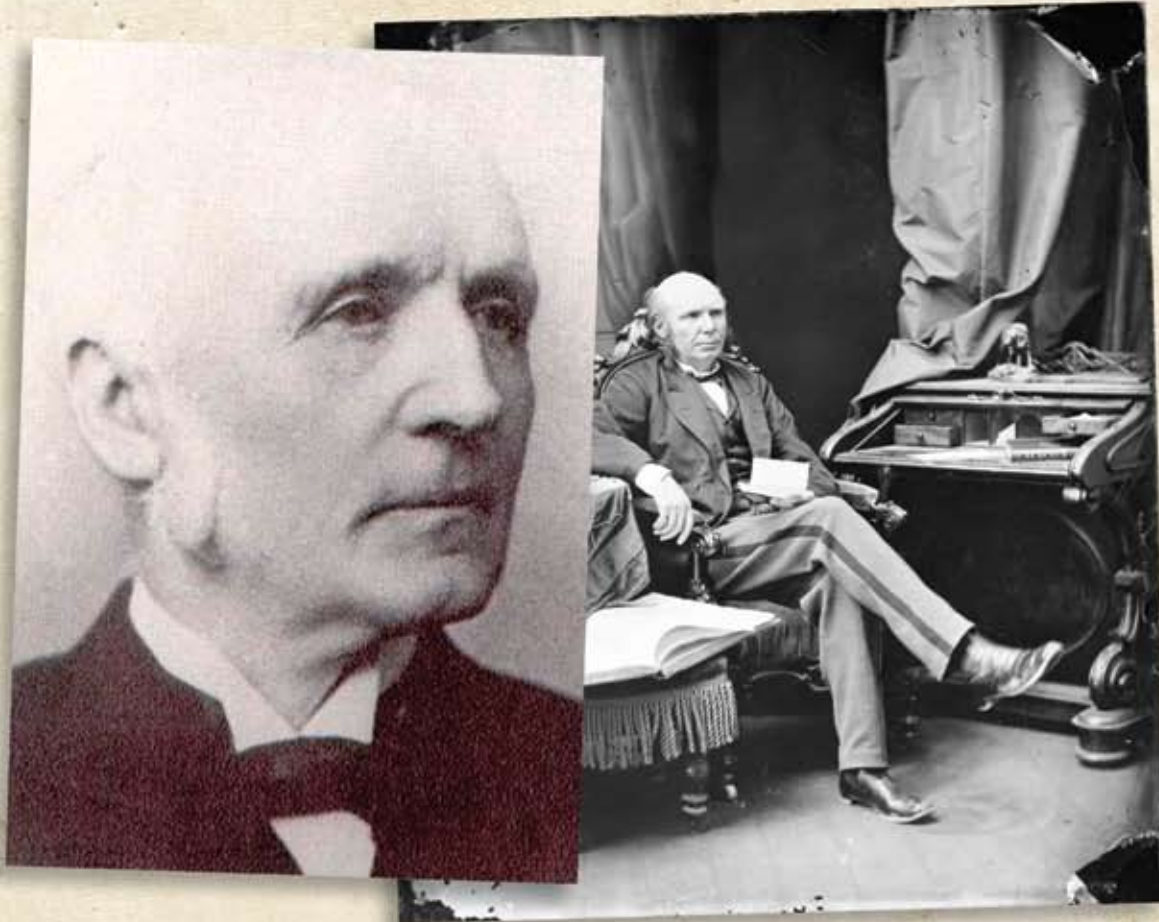
Fearing that a **bilateral** trade agreement might be reached between Newfoundland and the United States, Canada proposes that Newfoundland send a delegation to Ottawa to discuss confederation. None is sent.

1892

Newfoundland participates in the Halifax Conference, held to discuss issues affecting Canada and Newfoundland. Confederation is briefly discussed, but nothing concrete is achieved.

1895

An economic crisis brought on by Newfoundland’s Bank Crash of December 1894 again raises the question of confederation. A delegation is sent to Ottawa. Neither side is very enthusiastic. The Newfoundland delegation feels it has its “back to the wall” and can see no alternative. The Canadian government is politically weak and plagued by financial difficulties.



3.128 Ambrose Shea (left) and Frederic Carter (right)

In 1864, Newfoundland's Conservative government decided to send two delegates to the Quebec Conference: Frederic Carter, Speaker of the House of Assembly; and Ambrose Shea, leader of the Liberal opposition. These delegates did not have the power to commit the colony in any way, but they signed the Quebec Resolutions "as individuals" to show their support.

delegates supported resolutions passed at the conference, the Newfoundland government feared opposition to confederation and declined to proceed.

The issue of confederation was debated in the colony throughout the 1860s. In 1869, this culminated with an election that was based almost solely on this issue. It was won by the anti-confederates in a landslide victory, winning 21 of 30 seats. Not yet ready to give up "independence,"

Newfoundlanders had decided that they could survive and prosper on their own. The election was so decisive that the idea of confederation was set aside – indeed, it became a dirty word in many circles. Thus Newfoundland became the only British North American colony to try the experiment of independence within the British Empire. It would be over 80 years before Newfoundland would become a Canadian province in 1949.

1933

The Newfoundland government is virtually bankrupt. The possibility of confederation with the Canadian government is discussed. However, no concrete steps are taken.

1946

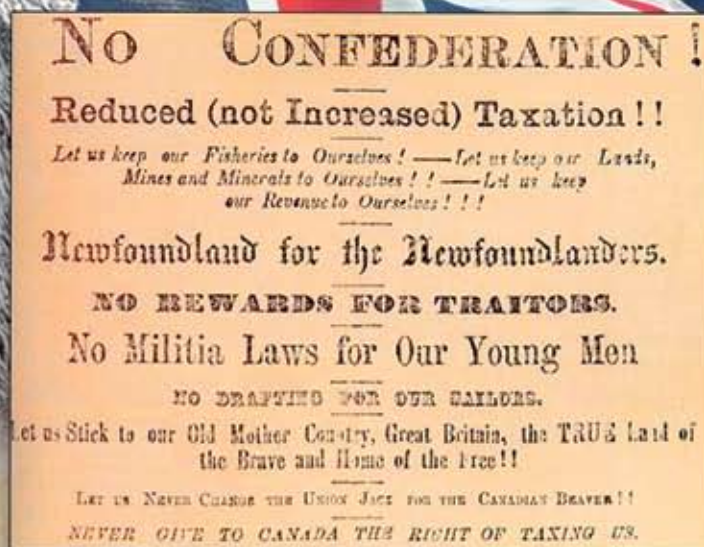
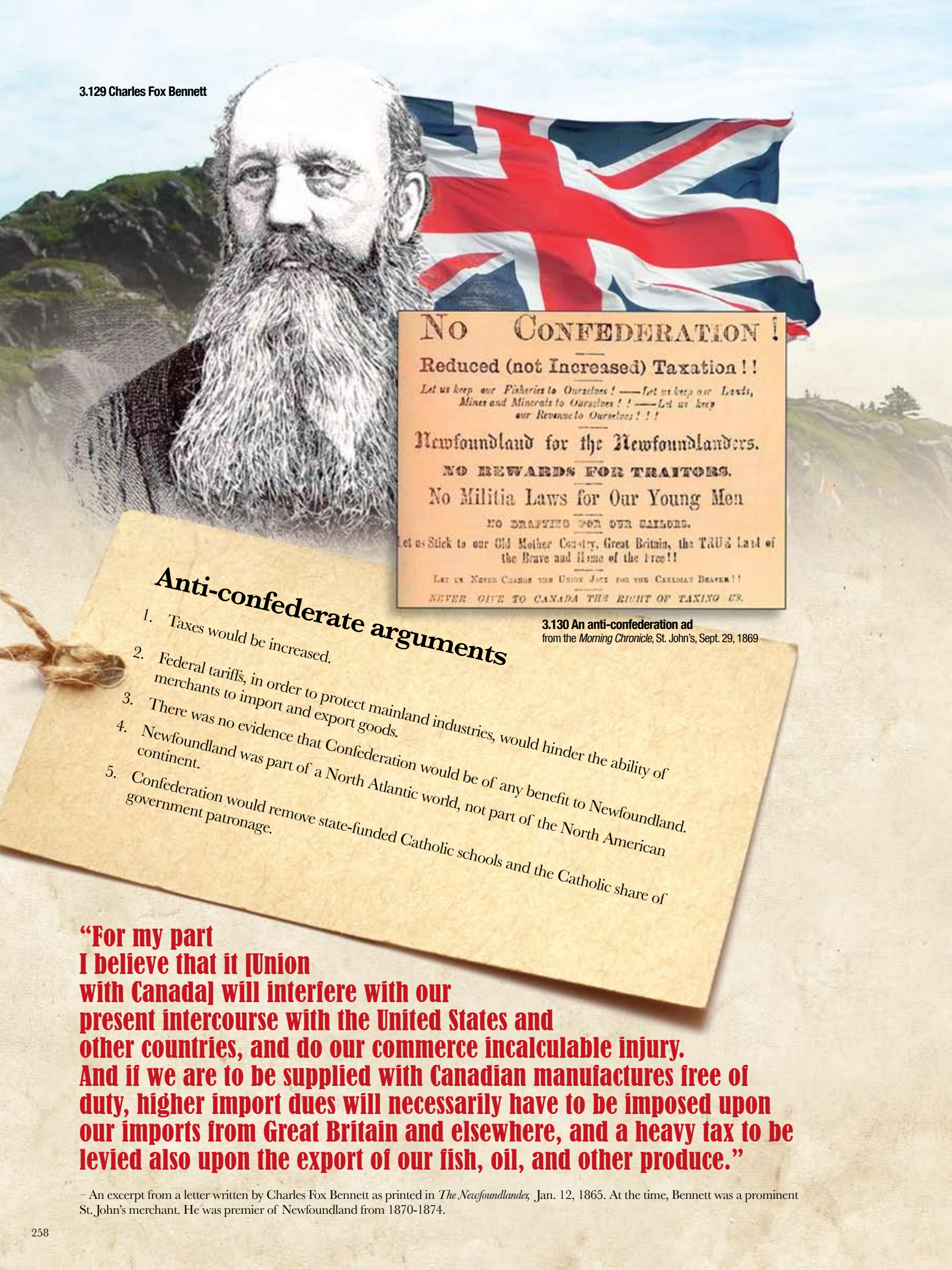
National Convention is organized to address future form of Newfoundland government. Confederation is identified as one option.

1948

A referendum is held to allow Newfoundlanders to choose among three options: confederation with Canada, responsible government, and Commission of Government. As a result, Commission of Government (which received the fewest votes) is dropped, and a second referendum is held. Confederation wins and Newfoundland signs the Terms of Union on Dec. 11, 1948.

1949

Newfoundland becomes part of Canada just before midnight on March 31.



3.130 An anti-confederation ad
from the *Morning Chronicle*, St. John's, Sept. 29, 1869

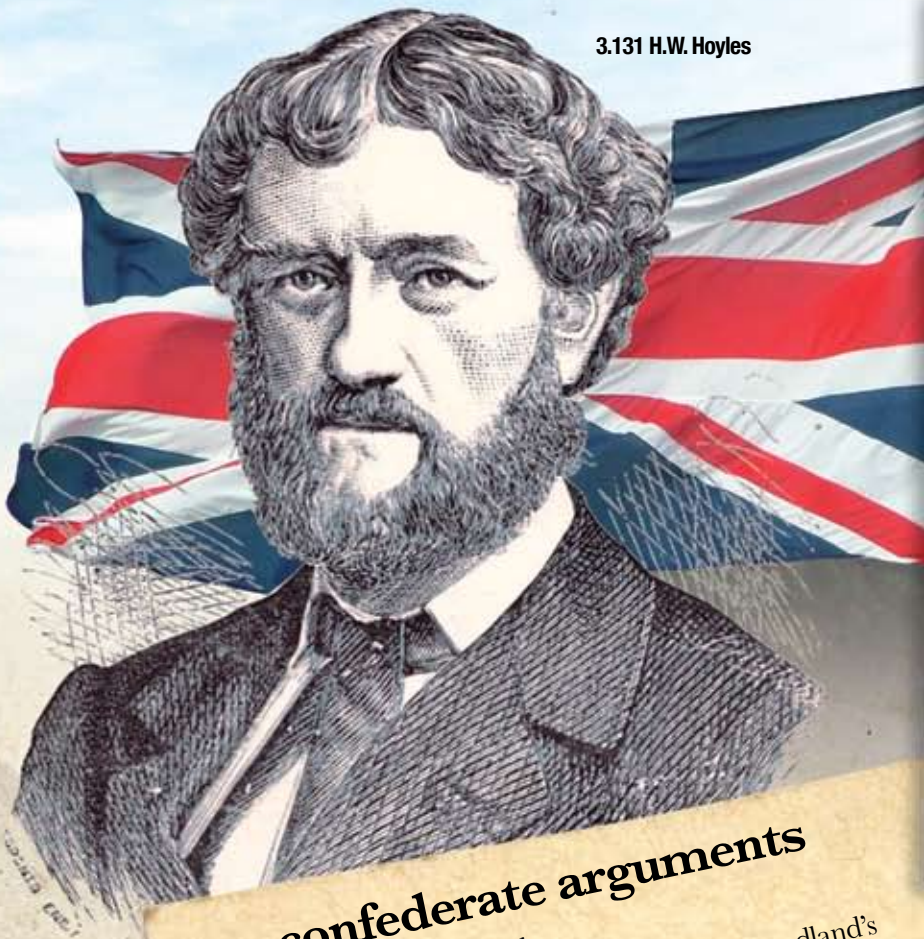
Anti-confederate arguments

1. Taxes would be increased.
2. Federal tariffs, in order to protect mainland industries, would hinder the ability of merchants to import and export goods.
3. There was no evidence that Confederation would be of any benefit to Newfoundland.
4. Newfoundland was part of a North Atlantic world, not part of the North American continent.
5. Confederation would remove state-funded Catholic schools and the Catholic share of government patronage.

“For my part I believe that it [Union with Canada] will interfere with our present intercourse with the United States and other countries, and do our commerce incalculable injury. And if we are to be supplied with Canadian manufactures free of duty, higher import dues will necessarily have to be imposed upon our imports from Great Britain and elsewhere, and a heavy tax to be levied also upon the export of our fish, oil, and other produce.”

— An excerpt from a letter written by Charles Fox Bennett as printed in *The Newfoundlander*, Jan. 12, 1865. At the time, Bennett was a prominent St. John's merchant. He was premier of Newfoundland from 1870-1874.

3.131 H.W. Hoyles



REASONS WHY

THE PEOPLE OF THIS COLONY SHOULD WISH TO BECOME CONNECTED WITH THEIR FELLOW-COLONISTS OF CANADA, NOVA SCOTIA AND NEW BRUNSWICK.

1st.—Because the condition of this country for some years past, proves the necessity of some important remedial change in our affairs.

2nd.—Because if such change be not effected, a large number of the people must leave the country for want of means to live in it.

3rd.—Because capital is being withdrawn from the trade, and there is no chance of maintaining even the present means of employment if we continue to rely on existing resources.

4th.—Because the population are broken down by poverty, and there is no hope in the future for the rising generation unless we can improve our condition.

5th.—Because it is found that wherever a Union of countries takes place on just and honourable conditions, the Union is strength, and leads to prosperity, as in the case of the United States of America.

6th.—Because the proposed Union with the neighbouring provinces will be on the terms of fair and equitable partnership (which terms will be guaranteed by the Imperial Government), in which equal rights will be secured and the interest of all will be to uphold one another and protect the common welfare and prosperity.

Pro-confederate arguments

1. Taxes would be reduced.
2. Union with Canada would strengthen Newfoundland's economy; investment would be encouraged.
3. Newfoundland would have a better future by becoming part of the emerging North American world, rather than remaining part of the old North Atlantic world.
4. Confederation would improve public services in Newfoundland.

“As time rolled on, our debt increasing year by year, while our resources were diminishing, and a third of our population for a third of the year were in a starving condition. The end of all this it was not difficult to discover – certain, inevitable national bankruptcy; and if so, where was the hope, in our present isolated state, for the future of Newfoundland? Go into confederation, and these evils are, to a great extent mitigated.”

— An excerpt from a speech by Premier H.W. Hoyles (Conservative, District of Burin) Assembly Debate, Feb. 14, 1865. *The Newfoundlander*, March 16, 1865.

3.132 A pro-confederation ad from *The Newfoundlander*, Sept. 10, 1869

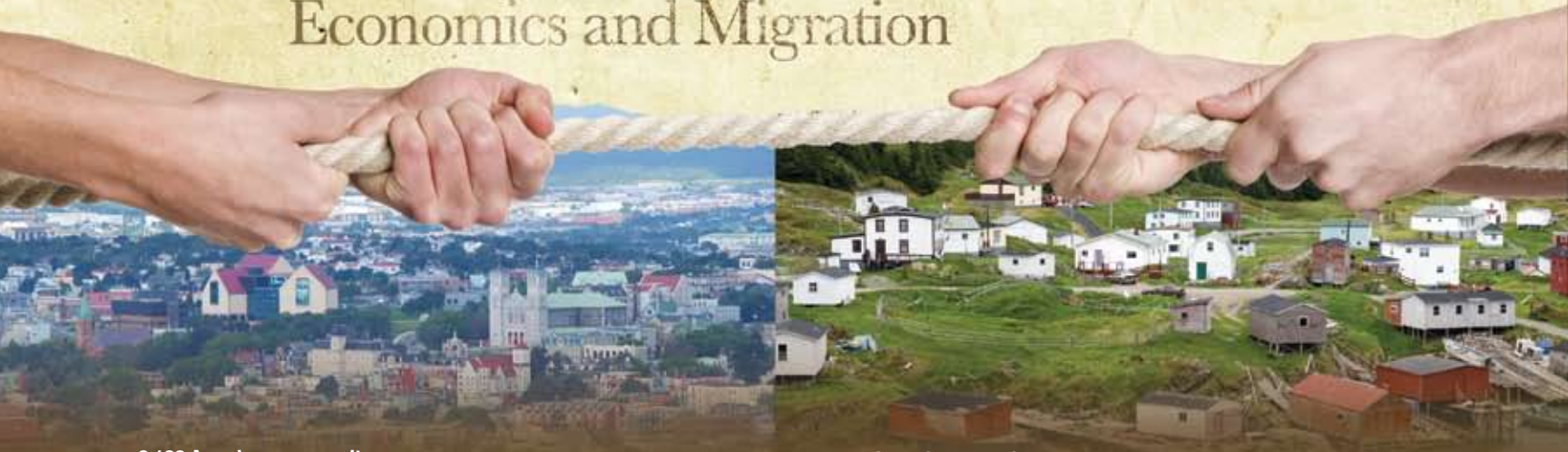
Questions:

1. The 1869 election was centred on whether or not Newfoundland should become part of Canada. What might have been the most significant argument offered by each side in the debate? How would you have voted? Why?
2. “Not yet ready to give up independence, Newfoundlanders had decided that they could survive and prosper on their own.” To what degree was Newfoundland and Labrador truly “independent”?
3. Although the anti-confederates won the 1869 election, was it inevitable that Newfoundland and Labrador would become part of Canada? Support your position.



AT ISSUE

Economics and Migration



3.133 An urban community

3.134 A rural community

Throughout this course we have seen that economic factors can have a significant influence on culture and society. In fact, economic opportunity was one of the major factors affecting European settlement of Newfoundland and Labrador. We learned in this chapter that the promise of employment, the appeal of land, and the chance of a new and better life all encouraged English, Irish, Scottish, and French immigrants to settle here. In other words, economic factors were among the most significant **push and pull factors** affecting the settlement of Newfoundland and Labrador. Push factors encourage people to leave their points of origin and settle elsewhere, while pull factors attract migrants to new areas.

Today, economic push and pull factors continue to affect patterns of **internal migration** in Newfoundland and Labrador, as people move from one region of the province to another. Our province is becoming increasingly urbanized. This means that significant numbers of people are choosing to leave their homes in smaller communities to settle in larger centres, such as St. John's and Corner Brook. In almost every year since Confederation, for example, the number of people leaving rural communities has far exceeded the number of those moving in. Why is this happening? What push factors may influence people to leave rural areas and what pull factors may prompt people to settle in urban areas?

The answers to these questions may vary from one individual or family to the next, but it is possible to outline general push and pull factors motivating immigration into urban areas. Generally, economic and social forces

are among the most significant push and pull factors. Small communities tend to offer fewer and lower paying jobs than larger towns and cities. Also, residents in urban areas often have access to a greater range of social services such as hospitals, daycare centres, better-equipped schools, and more efficient modes of public transit, than people living in rural areas.

Although out-migration has long been a reality in rural areas of the province (and in much of Canada), it has intensified in recent decades. This is because a powerful new push factor emerged in the 1990s to encourage emigration from outport communities. In 1992, the Northern cod stocks collapsed and the federal government imposed a moratorium on the fishery. Approximately 30 000 people were suddenly out of work and no other industries or businesses existed in rural communities to absorb the unemployed. In the coming months and years, thousands of people left



3.135
Harbour Buffett,
Placentia Bay in
the 1930s

their homes to find work. Some moved to other parts of Canada or the United States, but many also moved to urban centres in the province.

Today, rural areas continue to lose residents to urban centres. Most people leaving small communities are either young adults, between the ages of 15 and 24, or families with young children. Although they leave for a variety of reasons, the most common are to find jobs or to have better access to educational and medical facilities.

Much uncertainty now surrounds the future of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. The moratorium is still in place and it is unknown when or if the cod stocks will rebound. The growth of a shellfish industry has created work for some displaced workers, while tourism and small businesses have generated employment in other sectors. Nothing, however, has been able to curb the flow of people from small communities to St. John's, Alberta, and elsewhere, or to employ as many rural people as the centuries-old cod fishery once did.

For Discussion:

1. What are the "benefits" of urbanization?
2. What are the "limitations" of urbanization?
3. Why do some people continue to live in rural, even isolated, areas?
4. What can be done to reduce the negative effects of urbanization?
5. What should be done to ensure that the cultural roots of our province are preserved?
6. How might continued out-migration from rural areas affect families and individuals still living in small communities?

Questions:

1. What push and pull factors originally brought your family to the community or region where you live?
2. How is your community or region changing today?
3. Where do you see yourself living and working 10 years from now? What push-pull factors account for this? Which factor will be the most significant?
4. Do you have any friends or relatives who left your community to live in a larger centre? If so, how has this affected you?



Chapter Three Review

Summary

In this chapter we studied the period of the resident fishery in Newfoundland. We began by examining the beginnings of European permanent settlement in the colony, and the main groups who settled here. This was followed by a discussion of the resident fisheries that were prosecuted in Newfoundland and Labrador waters. We examined the importance of saltfish to the Newfoundland economy. Changing lifestyles, including the lifestyles of Aboriginal peoples, were studied. The chapter concluded with an examination of representative government, responsible government, and the debates concerning Newfoundland's autonomy.

Key Ideas

Specifically, we examined the following key ideas:

- At the beginning of the 1800s, the migratory fishery declined, and the resident population expanded rapidly, as Europeans from England, Ireland, Scotland, and France began settling here.
- These European residents took part in the shore, Labrador, banks, and seal fisheries.
- Saltfish was the colony's main export. This industry was affected by international competition, and was controlled by the merchants.
- The lifestyle of fishers revolved around this industry, including life on the land and on the sea.
- Aboriginal groups were affected during this time period. Beothuk became extinct, and other Aboriginal groups adapted their way of life as they were introduced to European methods and practices.
- A new group, the Metis, emerged as European men married Aboriginal women.
- The growing population needed a new system of governance. Representative government was established in 1832. This system had some success, but problems led to the establishment of responsible government in 1855.
- Starting in 1864, debates examined the value of Newfoundland remaining autonomous versus joining the Canadian confederation. Up until 1890 (the end period of this chapter), the debates always ended in maintaining autonomy for the colony.

Key Terms

Autonomy

Bank fishery

Cod trap

Colonialism

Confederation

Encroachment

Immigration

Labrador fishery

Metis

Push and pull factors

Representative government

Resident fishery

Responsible government

Seal fishery

Shore fishery

Technology

Questions

1. Why did permanent European settlement occur in Newfoundland and Labrador during the late 1700s and early 1800s?
2. How did the lives of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis change as a result of European settlement in Newfoundland and Labrador during the late 1700s and throughout the 1800s?
3. From your study in this chapter (mid-1700s to late-1800s):
 - a. Identify three examples of change. Which is the most significant?
 - b. Identify three examples of continuity. Which is the most significant?
4. Assume that you are a tour guide for a group of visitors who know very little about “this place.” Provide a brief, yet comprehensive, explanation of:
 - a. continuity and change in the fishery during the 1800s.
 - b. the disappearance of the Beothuk.
5. Use comic art to create a series of artworks that explains each of the fisheries during the 1800s.