

## **Off to Sydney: Newfoundlanders Emigrate to Industrial Cape Breton, 1890-1914**

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RON CRAWLEY

## Off to Sydney: Newfoundlanders Emigrate to Industrial Cape Breton, 1890-1914 \*

Come pack your duds and get away,  
We are not wanted here,  
We'll go where hundreds go each day  
From hunger and despair.  
We will go seek a country  
Where both milk and honey flow,  
So pack your "duds" for Sydney,  
For Ned Morris told me so.<sup>1</sup>

A CRISIS IN NEWFOUNDLAND'S AILING fishery and the opportunity to work in the developing wage-labour industries of Cape Breton produced between 1890 and 1914 one of the most dramatic movements of people in Newfoundland history. The "equilibrium" or "neo-classical" school views migration as the "cumulative result of individual decisions based on the rational evaluation of the benefits to be gained and costs entailed in moving" and interprets migration as a special case of the microeconomic theory of consumer choice.<sup>2</sup> Yet any explanation of Newfoundland migration during this period must involve more than an examination of the higher wage levels and greater economic returns available in Cape Breton. It was the striking decline of the traditional economic

\* The research for this paper began in St. John's, Newfoundland in the fall of 1986 with financial assistance from the Memorial University Vice-President's Research Grant. I wish to express my thanks to Del Muise who provided helpful comments on previous drafts of this paper.

- 1 *The Daily News* (St. John's), 7 July 1903. I wish to express my appreciation to Jessie Chisholm for bringing the poem to my attention as well as providing me with other references. In its entirety the poem "Off to Sydney" consists of nine stanzas and a chorus. It was written by "Scaliger", who is unknown to the author. Although no explanation of the poem or information about the author was provided it was evidently a satirical attack on E.P. Morris, Liberal Minister of Justice and Attorney General for Newfoundland under Premier Robert Bond. It brings to mind Dawn Fraser's "He Starved, He Starved I Tell You", a poem about a character called Eddie Crimmins from Port Aux Basques who starved on the streets of industrial Cape Breton in the 1920s. See Dawn Fraser, *Echoes From Labor's War: Industrial Cape Breton in the 1920's*, Introduction by David Frank and Donald Macgillivray (Toronto, 1976).
- 2 Charles H. Wood, "Equilibrium and Historical-structural Perspectives on Migration", *International Migration Review*, 16, 2 (1982), p. 301. Wood points out that the neo-classical approach has been criticized for ignoring capitalism as a structure which demands particular conditions if it is to function, but he argues that the other predominant perspective, the historical-structuralist approach, also needs to go beyond viewing migration solely in terms of the structural needs of capitalism and the accumulation process. See *ibid.*, pp. 301-3, 312-4. Agreeing with this point,

base in Newfoundland coupled with the unavailability of work in other sectors of the Newfoundland economy which produced large scale out-migration, of both a seasonal and long-term or permanent nature.<sup>3</sup> Only when faced with unemployment and economic deprivation did Newfoundlanders take advantage of the opportunities for wage labour in Cape Breton. The scale of this migration meant that Newfoundland migrant labour became an important component in the class formation and development of industrial Cape Breton. In the Cape Breton context Newfoundlanders provided a supply of relatively cheap powerless labour,<sup>4</sup> but they were not passive victims and they resisted exploitation in a number of ways. Nonetheless, they formed a distinct group within the Cape Breton working class and their resistance was not often coordinated with that of other workers. This important cleavage within the Cape Breton working class profoundly affected the latter's ability to struggle effectively against both capital and the state.

The census data clearly demonstrate the significance of Newfoundlanders in industrial Cape Breton. Between 1901 and 1921 over 50 per cent of Canada's Newfoundland-born residents lived in Nova Scotia.<sup>5</sup> Of those living in Nova Scotia 57 per cent were residing in industrial Cape Breton in 1901, 68 per cent by 1911 and 63 per cent in 1921.<sup>6</sup> Table I shows that the number of Newfoundland-born in Cape Breton increased by more than 400 per cent between 1891 and 1901, 49 per cent between 1901 and 1911 and 37 per cent between 1911 and 1921. Although significant numbers of Newfoundland-born also lived in Halifax,

Robert B. Bach and Lisa A. Schram maintain that labour power is not like other commodities since its "transfer from one place to another carries with it the movement of people — real historically active persons". See "Migration, Crisis and Theoretical Conflict", *ibid.*, 16, 2 (1982), p. 337.

- 3 Much of the migration literature which emphasizes the "pull" effect of expanding industrial centres ignores the importance of crisis within the country of origin. Even theories which connect capital accumulation at the centre with the rise of surplus labour in the periphery sometimes assign a remote secondary importance to this aspect of migration. See, for example, Saskia Sassen Koob, "The Internationalization of the Labour Force", p. 4 and Elizabeth McLean Petras, "The Global Market in the World Economy", in M.M. Kritz, C.B. Keely and S.M. Tomasi, eds., *Global Trends in Migration: Theory and Research on International Movements* (New York, 1981), p. 48.
- 4 The utilization of such labour by capital, it has been argued, mitigates against the tendency towards a declining rate of profit and crises. According to Saskia Sassen-Koob the positive effects of labour importation on profit rate are brought about in three ways: the lowering of the costs of reproduction of labour through the physical separation of the maintenance and renewal aspects of labour, reducing the costs of labour power to particular capitalists through lower wages, and counteracting tendencies toward cyclical recession by exporting unemployment, thus keeping social capital at a lower level than would otherwise be the case. See "The Internationalization of the Labour Force", *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 15, 4 (1980), pp. 19-23.
- 5 Peter Neary, "Canadian Immigration Policy and the Newfoundlanders, 1912-1939", *Acadiensis*, XI, 2 (Spring 1982), p. 71.
- 6 Canada, *Census*, 1901, vol I, Table XIII; *Census*, 1921, vol II, Table 37.

TABLE 1

Newfoundland-born residing in four census districts of  
Cape Breton, 1891-1921

District	1891	1901	1911	1921
C.B. South	521	3,392	3,281	7,179
Richmond	20	20	16	13
Inverness	36	20	26	40
C.B. North & Victoria	323	239	2,141	228
Total	900	3,671	5,464	7,460

Source: *Census of Canada*, 1891, 1901, 1911 & 1921. It should be noted that the names and boundaries of the census districts changed several times during this period. The most significant result of these changes was the inclusion or exclusion of the towns of North Sydney and Sydney Mines in C.B. South and C.B. North. Hence, the slight decrease in the Newfoundland-born population for C.B. South between 1901 and 1911, and the striking increase in C.B. North for the same period. This also accounts for the decline of Newfoundland-born in C.B. North between 1911 and 1921 and corresponding increase for C.B. South.

Toronto and Montreal, by 1921 their greatest number relative to total population was in the industrial towns of Cape Breton (see Table II).

Prior to the 1890s the vast majority of immigrants to Cape Breton County came from the British Isles, in particular Scotland. At that time Cape Breton's economy was predominantly fishing and agricultural, except for the numerous small-scale coal operations in and around Sydney Mines and Glace Bay and some rail and port activity at Sydney.<sup>7</sup> When American promoter Henry Melville Whitney and some well known Canadian capitalists took control of most of the coal mines and began production on an unprecedented scale in the mid 1890s there was a great demand for labour.<sup>8</sup> The demand grew with the establishment of the steel industries at Sydney in 1899 and at Sydney Mines in

7 David Schwartzman, "Mergers in the Nova Scotia Coal Fields: A History of the Dominion Coal Company, 1893-1940", Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1952-53, p. 102. Also David Frank, "Coal Masters and Coal Miners: The 1922 Strike and the Roots of Class Conflict in the Cape Breton Coal Industry", M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1974, p. 13.

8 An examination of Whitney and his various ventures are provided in Don MacGillivray, "Henry Melville Whitney comes to Cape Breton: The Saga of a Gilded Age Entrepreneur", *Acadiensis*, IX, I (1979), pp. 44-70.

TABLE II

% of Newfoundland-Born in Select Canadian Towns/Cities, 1921

Town/City	Total Pop.	Nfld Born	% of Total Pop.	Rank
SYDNEY	22,545	2,459	10.9	1
GLACE BAY	17,007	1,362	8.0	2
SYDNEY MINES	8,327	473	5.7	3
HALIFAX	58,372	2,719	4.7	4
TORONTO	512,893	1,976	.04	5
MONTREAL	618,506	2,027	.03	6

Source: *Census of Canada*, 1921, vol II.

It should be noted that the census reports only provided this information for towns or cities with a population greater than 7,500. Therefore, no information was supplied on the number of Newfoundland-born in North Sydney (population 6,585), which was the first place of entry into Canada for most Newfoundlanders.

TABLE III

Foreign-Born residing in Cape Breton County, 1891-1921

Place of Birth	1891	(%)	1901	(%)	1911	(%)	1921	(%)
BRITISH ISLES	2054	(74)	1553	(25)	2822	(28)	4160	(26)
NEWFOUNDLAND	521	(19)	3392	(54)	3281	(33)	7179	(45)
UNITED STATES	98	(4)	679	(11)	654	(7)	866	(5)
OTHER COUNTRIES	75	(3)	610	(10)	3196	(32)	3870	(24)
Total	2748		6234		9953		16075	

Source: *Census of Canada*, 1891-1921. As mentioned in regard to Table I the boundary and name of Cape Breton census districts changed within this period.

1904.<sup>9</sup> As Table III demonstrates, Newfoundlanders were a significant proportion of the foreign-born who came to take advantage of this demand. By the turn of the century the Newfoundland-born in Cape Breton County outnumbered all other foreign-born combined and in 1911 and 1921 they were still more numerous than the foreign-born from the British Isles or the whole of Europe. Newfoundlanders had become a significant part of the emerging industrial proletariat in Cape Breton and their particularly strong representation in Sydney (11 per cent of the population) suggests that they were especially important within the steel industry.

The rapid influx of Newfoundlanders into Cape Breton was fuelled by developments in Newfoundland. The salt cod industry dominated Newfoundland's economy through the 19th century and well into the 20th, but in the late 1880s and 1890s it underwent a severe crisis. A dramatic decrease in the export price of salt fish was accompanied by a decline in the industry's male labour force from 60,000 in 1884 to 37,000 in 1891.<sup>10</sup> The crisis, which had an especially profound effect on the Labrador fishery and the communities of Conception Bay which relied on this fishery in the summer season, was due to the increased competition for world markets, the demand for a higher quality product, and the failure of the Conception Bay seal fishery which declined in large part because of the introduction of steam powered vessels requiring large scale capital which concentrated the fishery in St. John's.<sup>11</sup> The crisis in the fishery and the failure to achieve a significant home grown industrial and agricultural base precipitated the search for foreign direct investment firms to develop modern large scale resource based industries.<sup>12</sup> As some large scale resource industries were established, one St. John's editor expressed the hope that "it should not be difficult to transfer the coastal folk on the bleak and impoverished shores of White Bay and other sections, to the more inviting areas where other industries will spring up which would pay them better, and thereby enhance the sum of the general weal".<sup>13</sup> Yet, although considerable internal migration occurred, it did not stop the exodus of people from the island. The opening and expansion of the Bell Island iron ore mines, the construction of the trans-island railway in the 1890s, and the development of a large scale forest/pulp and paper industry after

9 Ron Crawley, "Class Conflict and the Establishment of the Sydney Steel Industry, 1899-1904", M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1980, pp. 50-3.

10 David Alexander, "Newfoundland's Traditional Economy and Development to 1934", in Phillip Buckner and David Frank, eds, *The Acadiensis Reader: Vol II, Atlantic Canada After Confederation* (Fredericton, 1985), p. 18. For an analysis of the cod fishery in Newfoundland see Shannon Ryan, *Fish out of Water: The Newfoundland Saltfish Trade, 1814-1914* (St. John's, 1986).

11 Peter Neary, "'Traditional' and 'Modern' Elements in the Social and Economic History of Bell Island and Conception Bay", *Historical Papers* (1973), p. 117.

12 Alexander, "Newfoundland's Traditional Economy and Development to 1934", pp. 24-6.

13 *Evening Herald* (St. John's), 11 February 1903.

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the turn of the century could not offset the continuing decline of the fishery.

As a result of this prolonged and deepening crisis within the fishery, many outport people experienced a serious deterioration in their living conditions. An editorial in the *Evening Telegram* stated in 1899 that “the most marked destitution prevails in Harbour Grace and Bay de Verde districts, but it exists also in the district of Port-de-Grave, and in the district of Harbour Main. Truth to tell, there are few places in the colony in which the pinch of want, even at this advanced season of the year, is not severely felt”.<sup>14</sup> The loss of earnings was accompanied by inflation in the price of daily necessities, especially when goods were bought on credit.<sup>15</sup> Most outport people undoubtedly engaged in subsistence production of food such as meat, garden vegetables and of course fish, and thereby lessened their dependence on the marketplace, but as one rather terse report stated, “Destitution prevails in several outports in Newfoundland, according to recent advises [sic], people having no food but cornmeal”.<sup>16</sup> The extent and quality of the distress is perhaps best measured by the large number of Newfoundlanders who left the Island.<sup>17</sup>

Many researchers have ignored or underestimated the extent and persistence of seasonal migration among Newfoundlanders during this period. For example, based on a review of the literature, Mary-Jane Lipkin concluded that “What distinguished the 1890’s influx of Newfoundlanders from other years was that most Newfoundlanders apparently ceased to be seasonal sojourners and became permanent residents of the Cape Breton Area”.<sup>18</sup> Yet, although the number of Newfoundland-born residents in Cape Breton increased dramatically after the 1890s, there continued to be a very substantial volume of seasonal migration throughout the pre World War I period. The emigration of Newfoundlanders to

14 *Evening Telegram*, 19 May 1899.

15 Relations within the Newfoundland fishery were characterized by the truck system whereby small boat fishers were supplied with equipment and food by the fish merchants on credit. At the end of the season the fisherman returned to the merchant with enough fish products to repay his debt (hopefully). Such a system effectively bound many fishermen to a particular merchant. See Steven Antler, “The Capitalist Underdevelopment of Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland” in Robert J. Brym and R. James Sacouman, eds., *Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada* (Toronto, 1979), pp. 191-4.

16 *Evening Herald*, 31 May 1902.

17 It is also reflected in the internal migration and the strikes and boycotts carried out by fishermen. For example, in the 1900 strike of Bell Island ore workers it was noted that many of the strikers were fishermen of Conception Bay who worked the mines on a seasonal basis. See the *Evening Telegram*, 13 June to 26 July 1900; also see Neary, “‘Traditional’ and ‘Modern’ Elements” for an analysis of the community of Bell Island and its connection to the fishing culture of Newfoundland. In 1902 large numbers of fishermen boycotted the Labrador fishery demanding a wage rather than a share of the value of the catch (*Evening Telegram*, 9 June 1902). In that same year 4000 sealers struck for three days, winning a bigger share and free berths (*The Trade Review*, 15 March 1902).

18 Mary Jane Lipkin, “Reluctant Recruitment: Nova Scotia Immigration Policy, 1867-1914”, M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1982, p. 56.

Cape Breton continued to take two different but related forms — the seasonal movement of mostly young men to and from the coal mines and steel plants of Cape Breton and the long-term or permanent settlement of Newfoundland men, women, and children. The first was partly a result of the seasonality of available work in the Cape Breton coal and steel industries. It was also a reflection of many Newfoundlanders' dislike for the dangerous, dirty, heavily supervised and lowly paid industrial wage work with which many of them were unaccustomed. Finally, it was part of a strategy to maintain their involvement in the fishery and continue living in Newfoundland with their friends and family.

There have been numerous attempts to calculate the number of people who emigrated from Newfoundland. Using birth/death rates and census data David Alexander estimated that between 1884 and 1901 there was an annual net migration of between 1,500 and 2,500; and between 1901 and 1945 an annual rate of from 1000 to 1500.<sup>19</sup> Patricia Thornton's analysis of out-migration from Atlantic Canada confirmed this estimate, showing that net emigration from Newfoundland totalled over 20,000 between 1891 and 1901 and over 16,000 between 1901 and 1911.<sup>20</sup> Using census data, Michael Staveley has suggested that out-migration was much more extensive from the Conception Bay area, the heart of the Labrador fishery and a stronghold of the Newfoundland Irish.<sup>21</sup> The census data also suggests that, while out-migration predominated among the 15-25 age group, there was less age-selectivity than previously assumed as well as a higher proportion of emigrant families.<sup>22</sup>

One of the central problems in estimating the extent of migration from census data is that many Newfoundlanders did not come to Canada to settle permanently or long-term, but for temporary or seasonal work.<sup>23</sup> According to *The Trade Review*, "nine tenths of our people who go out in the spring return in the fall, and that, beside this, many are coming back that have been away from their home".<sup>24</sup> The *Evening Telegram* commented on the extraordinary, but patterned, movements of Newfoundlanders:

19 Alexander, "Newfoundland's Traditional Economy and Development to 1934", p. 18.

20 Patricia Thornton, "The Problem of Out-Migration from Atlantic Canada, 1871-1921: A New Look", *Acadiensis*, XV, 1 (Autumn 1985), p. 34.

21 Michael Staveley, "Population Dynamics in Newfoundland: The Regional Patterns", in John J. Mannion, ed., *The Peopling of Newfoundland: Essays in Historical Geography* (Toronto, 1977), pp. 57-9.

22 Patricia Thornton, "The Problem of Out-Migration", pp. 24-5.

23 There are other problems with the census reports. In the case of the 1911 Newfoundland census, the reports do not even reflect who was living on the Island since they include anyone who was reported absent from Newfoundland for less than 18 months. In addition, according to Mr. R. Watson, the Colonial Secretary, even that restriction was waived for "any head of a family who is employed out of the colony, but whose family continues to reside in the colony". *The Daily News*, 9 September 1911. This is information based only on the one newspaper account cited and I do not know whether this policy was implemented for censuses other than 1911.

24 *Trade Review*, 21 January 1905.



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There is probably nothing in the world like the industrial habits of Newfoundlanders. Thousands of families — men, women and children — who migrate to Labrador every summer for the cod-fishery, return in the autumn before the snow falls. Then there is the exodus of thousands of young men every spring to work in the dockyards of Philadelphia, the freight piers of New York, the steam-trawlers of Boston, the bank vessels of Gloucester or in the mines or on the railroads in Nova Scotia. These all, or nearly all return again in the autumn, bringing their savings with them.<sup>25</sup>

The *Evening Herald*, in an attempt to prove that “the great exodus” of people had ceased by 1904, published figures based on ships reports which showed that between 1 May and 31 December 1902 and 1903, 13,534 people emigrated, but 12,716 residents returned, excluding “ordinary travellers”, tourists and others.<sup>26</sup> As early as 1900 the *Canadian Mining Review* reported an “annual exodus of the able-bodied men of the ancient colony to the mines of Cape Breton to the extent of 300 to 500” and in 1906 declared that a shortage of labour in the coal mines was due to the departure of Newfoundlanders for the fishing grounds.<sup>27</sup>

A sense of the extent and pattern of population movements from Newfoundland to Cape Breton can be obtained through examining the annual reports of the Immigration Branch of the Canadian Department of the Interior. Although no immigration agent was stationed at North Sydney until November, 1906,<sup>28</sup> the North Sydney reports for the seven years from 1908 to 1914 provide an estimate of population movement out of Newfoundland.<sup>29</sup> They show the number of Newfoundland-born who travelled “saloon” (first class) or “steerage” (second class) and indicate the number who declared themselves bound for Canada or for the United States. Unfortunately, a breakdown according to occupation, month of arrival and regional destination are only provided for “immigrants” travelling as steerage passengers who declared themselves destined for Canada. From a perusal of the Ships’ Manifests it is clear that the Newfoundland-born saloon passengers were overwhelmingly middle class and

25 *Evening Telegram*, 22 December 1903.

26 *Evening Herald*, 21 June 1904. From 1902 the masters of passenger ships operating from Newfoundland were required by the Newfoundland government to record the numbers and destination of passengers. Whether these reports are still in existence is unknown.

27 *Canadian Mining Review*, XIX, 10 (October 1900), p. 214; XXVII, 7 (July 1906), p. 31.

28 Although Halifax was reporting on the arrival of Newfoundlanders prior to 1906 the numbers represent a small proportion of Newfoundland emigrants to Canada. In addition, Newfoundlanders were not distinguished in the reports from immigrants of the British Isles until 1902. There is no comparable record of those people entering Newfoundland from Canada through Port Aux Basques.

29 Canada, Department of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Immigration, 1908-1914*, National Archives of Canada (NAC). Each annual report was based on the April to March period rather than the calendar year. The figures for 1907 represented only the last nine

professional types travelling on business or as tourists, although there were some women and children in this group travelling to join husbands working in Canada and the United States. Since the total number of saloon Newfoundland-born passengers represented only 16.5 per cent of Newfoundland-born disembarking at North Sydney, the 24,275 Newfoundland-born steerage passengers represented the vast majority of working class Newfoundlanders passing through North Sydney (see Table IV).

TABLE IV

Newfoundland-born Pasengers disembarking at North Sydney, 1908-1914

SEX	SALOON	STEERAGE	TOTAL	% of TOTAL
MALE	2,428 (13%)	16,365 (87%)	18,793	64.6
FEMALE	1,994 (24.6%)	6,114 (75.4%)	8,108	27.9
CHILDREN	379 (17.4%)	1,796 (82.6%)	2,175	7.5
TOTAL	4,801 (16.5%)	24,275 (83.5%)	29,076	100.0

Table V indicates that the scale of migration was substantially larger than suggested by the census data and much of the scholarly literature. For the 1908-1914 period an average of 3,468 Newfoundland "immigrants" per year disembarked at North Sydney. Of these, 67.4 per cent were males, 25.2 per cent were female and the remaining 7.4 per cent children, supporting the general perception in the press that the migrants were overwhelmingly male. Of these passengers 61.5 per cent declared themselves bound for Canada, the remainder for the United States. Although there were more women (57.6 per cent) bound

TABLE V

Newfoundland-born steerage Passengers disembarking at North Sydney by Sex and Country of Destination, 1908-1914

Sex	For Canada	For the U.S.	Total	% of Total
Male	11,033 67.4%	5,332 32.6%	16,365	67.4%
Female	2,594 42.4%	3,520 57.6%	6,114	25.2%
Children	1,293 72.0%	503 28.0%	1,796	7.4%
Total	14,920 61.5%	9,355 38.5%	24,275	100.0%

Source: Canada, Department of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Immigration*, 1908-1914, NAC. Compiled by the author.

for the United States than for Canada (42.4 per cent), a larger number of males (67.4 per cent) and children (72 per cent) were destined for Canada. These statistics suggest that more single women were bound for the United States to find employment while most of the women with children were destined for Canada to join husbands who were working there.

An examination of the statistics for Newfoundland-born immigrants to Canada on the basis of occupation, time of arrival, and destination provides a much clearer profile of these people and their pattern of migration. The vast majority of male migrants (86.2 per cent) were classed as "general laborers", while 6.1 per cent were "mechanics", 2.9 per cent "miners" and 4.8 per cent other or unspecified categories (see Table VI).<sup>30</sup> Since only mechanics, perhaps miners and some of the "other" category would be considered skilled workers, our

TABLE VI

Occupation of Male Newfoundland-born immigrants through N. Sydney,  
1908-1914

YEAR	LABOURER	MECHANIC	MINER	OTHER	TOTAL	% OF TOTAL
1908	2,091	182	95	96	2,464	22.3
1909	1,280	160	70	82	1,592	14.4
1910	2,298	101	52	171	2,622	23.8
1911	1,468	69	41	65	1,643	14.9
1912	1,806	71	45	71	1,993	18.1
1913	476	60	13	20	569	5.1
1914	93	29	3	25	150	1.4
TOTAL	9,512	672	319	530	11,033	100.0
% of						
TOTAL	86.2	6.1	2.9	4.8	100.0	

profile is not only of a predominantly male transitory work force, but one that was generally considered unskilled.<sup>31</sup> Among female migrants the largest category was "female servants" or domestics who accounted for 45.9 per cent of female immigrants to Canada (see Table VII). Women's occupation among the remainder was apparently often recorded as that of their husbands, explaining why 19.6 per

months for the reporting year (July-March) and were therefore not used.

30 In addition to the unspecified, there were very small numbers who were recorded as clerks and traders, or farmers.

31 While many of these men were fishermen who possessed numerous fishing related skills, such skills were not usually recognized within the industrial setting.

TABLE VII

Occupation of Female Newfoundland-born Immigrants to Canada disembarking at North Sydney, 1908-1914

Year	Domestic	Labourer	Mechanic	Miner	Other	Total	%of Total
1908	284	98	44	30	99	555	21.4
1909	225	33	25	29	56	368	14.2
1910	313	61	23	4	153	554	21.4
1911	126	96	18	1	120	361	13.9
1912	131	168	8	0	106	413	15.9
1913	60	43	12	4	81	200	7.7
1914	53	9	10	1	70	143	5.5
TOTAL	1,192	508	140	69	685	2,594	100.0
% OF							
TOTAL	45.9	19.6	5.4	2.7	26.4	100.0	

cent were recorded as general laborers, 5.4 per cent as mechanics and 2.7 per cent as miners.<sup>32</sup> Of all Newfoundland immigrants passing through North Sydney between 1908 and 1914 38.5 per cent were destined for the United States (see Table V). Of those destined for Canada 88 per cent intended to work or settle in the Maritime region, while 4.5 per cent, 4.2 per cent, 1.1 per cent and 2.2 per cent declared themselves bound for Quebec, Ontario, the Prairies and British Columbia respectively (see Table VIII).<sup>33</sup>

A breakdown by the month of arrival in North Sydney provides important information about the seasonality of the migrants' movements. Table IX indicates that the most significant movement occurred in the spring and fall of the year, the least in the winter months.<sup>34</sup> This variation in movement can probably be interpreted as occurring in two waves, the largest after the winter seal fishery and the other following the summer fishery on the Labrador and other parts of Newfoundland. Work was more available in industrial Cape Breton in the spring and summer due to outside construction and increased

32 The 26.4 per cent in the "other" were mostly unspecified except for a very small proportion who were recorded as clerks and traders, or farmers.

33 Unfortunately the annual reports do not give a more detailed breakdown of where exactly the migrants were intending to settle or work.

34 The almost insignificant difference in the figures for the July-September and October-December periods is accounted for by the fact that one of the major peak periods is the months of September and October which straddle the two periods.

TABLE VIII

Destination of Newfoundland-Born Immigrants bound for Canada,  
1908-14

Year	Maritimes	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	Brit Columbia
1908	2,963	140	103	36	78
1909	1,874	66	66	37	43
1910	3,089	94	109	9	45
1911	1,894	94	101	25	86
1912	2,284	109	112	29	45
1913	777	49	92	28	27
1914	246	118	43	6	3
TOTAL	13,127	670	626	170	327
% OF					
TOTAL	88.0	4.5	4.2	1.1	2.2

TABLE IX

Newfoundland-born Migrants' Time of Arrival in North Sydney

YEAR	Jan-Mar	Apr-June	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total
1908	544	1,201	667	908	3,320
1909	305	783	525	473	2,086
1910	443	1,139	706	1,058	3,346
1911	349	886	304	661	2,200
1912	93	1,200	962	324	2,579
1913	18	607	156	192	973
1914	11	160	167	78	416
TOTAL	1,763	5,976	3,487	3,694	14,920
% OF					
TOTAL	11.8	40.0	23.4	24.8	100.0

Compiled by the author from monthly statistics provided in the annual reports of the Superintendent of Immigration, 1908-1914.

activity at the steel plants and coal mines, but a migrant worker could not unnecessarily delay his departure from Newfoundland since more of the best jobs were taken as the spring progressed. By mid-summer industrial Cape Breton probably had a relatively stable population. In the fall of the year, new migrants replaced those returning to winter in Newfoundland for the purposes of preparing for the seal fishery or spending the winter with family. In addition, the prospects of spending a long cold winter living in the "shacks" next to the steel company's property no doubt discouraged many Newfoundlanders from staying the winter. It is also probable that many Newfoundlanders were not committed to staying in Nova Scotia any longer than it took to save some money. Given the fact that their homes were only a day or two travel by boat and train, returning to Newfoundland was not difficult.

The "Ships' Manifests" (passenger lists) of the "S.S. Bruce", which was the principal vessel operating between Port Aux Basque and North Sydney, provide additional information on Newfoundland-born passengers.<sup>35</sup> Whereas the annual reports show 86.2 per cent of the males as "general Labourers", an examination of two passenger lists for each of the twelve months in 1907 shows only 62 per cent of the 786 males in that category, while 20 per cent are designated as fisherman or seaman, a category not mentioned in the annual reports.<sup>36</sup> An inordinately high percentage (68 per cent) of this latter group arrived in the spring of the year, many no doubt bound for work in the Nova Scotian and New England fisheries (see Table X). According to the annual reports, the destination of 88 per cent of Canadian-bound Newfoundlanders was the Maritime region. However, the passenger list sample reveals that 61 per cent of the males were destined for Cape Breton, 10 per cent for elsewhere in Nova Scotia, 8 per cent for other parts of Canada, and the remainder (21 per cent) for the United States (see Table XI). Of all men, women and children in the sample destined for Canada, 80 per cent were bound for Cape Breton.

35 Canada, Department of the Interior, *Ships' Manifests* (North Sydney), 1906-1908, RG 76, Reel T-520, NAC. These lists provide the name, sex, age, occupation, country of birth and destination of passengers on the "SS Bruce". They sometimes also record the marital status and whether the passenger could read and/or write. The requirement of ascertaining the amount of money immigrants had in their possession apparently applied only to those from countries other than the British Isles and Newfoundland. I used the 1907 lists because they were the first for which records were kept. I was only able to probe this information in a very preliminary way and therefore the comments based on this statistical sample are tentative. The selection of two passenger lists for month of 1907 was used in order to insure that seasonal variations would be considered. Since the "Bruce" made three trips to North Sydney each week during the spring, summer and autumn and at least two trips in the winter, weather permitting, the sample probably represents at least 15 per cent of the passenger lists for 1907. The sample excludes those whose birthplace is not Newfoundland. It also excludes all first class passengers, which is in keeping with the annual reports, but it includes Newfoundland-born passengers destined for the United States.

36 It appears that in tabulating the annual reports the immigration officer designated all fishermen as general laborers.

TABLE X

Newfoundland-born male migrants by occupation and time of arrival,  
1907 Sample

Occupation	Jan-Mar	Apr-June	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total	% of
Laborer	167	221	35	66	489	62%
Fisher/ Seaman	19	107	13	18	157	20%
Other/ Unspec	53	31	17	39	140	18%
Total	239	359	65	123	786	100%
% of Total	30%	46%	8%	16%	100%	

TABLE XI

Destination of Male Newfoundland-born Immigrants  
by Time of Arrival, 1907 Sample

Destination	Jan-Mar	Apr-June	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total	% of
Cape Breton	174	187	38	84	483	61%
Nova Scotia	15	55	3	5	78	10%
Canada	4	30	12	13	59	8%
United States	46	87	12	21	166	21%

According to the annual reports, 45.9 per cent of the female migrants were domestics, but only 38 per cent of the 165 women in the sample were so classified with 45 per cent said to be "settlers" or joining a spouse or family and the remaining 17 per cent other or unspecified (see Table XII). The sample supports the annual reports in indicating that a large percentage of women were destined for the United States (see Table XIII) and suggests that, unlike their male counterpart, Cape Breton was not the favorite destination of the women since only 26 per cent of the adult female sample was destined for Cape Breton while 61 per cent of the men were so destined. This discrepancy is probably explained by the fewer employment opportunities for women in the industrial towns of Cape Breton. Perhaps because of the longer distances involved and the greater year-round employment opportunities in the United States there was also a greater tendency for the males in the United States to send for their families rather than commute on a seasonal basis, since of the 48 families identified (men, women and children with the same surname travelling together), 44 per cent

were travelling to the United States, while 35 per cent were destined for Cape Breton and the remainder for elsewhere in Canada (see Table XIV).

TABLE XII

Female Newfoundland-Born immigrants by Occupation and Time of Arrival, 1907 Sample

Occupation	Jan-March	April-June	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total	% of
Settler	8	23	22	21	74	45%
Domestic	1	25	15	21	62	38%
Other/unspec	12	10	7	0	29	17%
Total	21	58	44	42	165	100%
% of Total	13%	35%	27%	25%		

TABLE XIII

Female Newfoundland-Born Immigrants by Destination and Time of Arrival, 1907 Sample

Destination	Jan-March	April-June	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total	% of
Cape Breton	2	17	13	11	43	26%
Canada/ exc. C.B.	6	11	9	8	34	21%
United States	13	30	22	23	88	53%
Total	21	58	44	42	165	100%

TABLE XIV

Newfoundland-Born Immigrant Families by Destination and Time of Arrival, 1907 Sample

Destination	Jan-March	April-June	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Total	% of
Cape Breton	0	7	7	3	17	35%
Canada/ exc. C.B.	1	5	3	1	10	21%
United States	0	6	9	6	21	44%
Total	1	18	19	10	48	100%



The sample also confirms the age and marital status of the profile as described in the press. Of 104 male laborers drawn from two passenger lists the average age was 22. For the 62 female domestics the average age was 21. In almost all cases, domestics were single. Of those 166 male laborers whose marital status was indicated, 33 per cent were married. If this is generalized to the entire population,<sup>37</sup> it suggests that the wage labour performed by married migrant males was an important factor in the livelihood of many Newfoundland families. It also suggests that many Newfoundland women commonly bore sole responsibility for the day to day maintenance of the household and care of the family.

Seasonal migration was frequently a prelude to settlement. Based on census reports, Table XV provides a numerical distribution of Newfoundland immigrants in Nova Scotia in 1921 according to sex and year of arrival in Canada. Female immigrants exceeded the number of males (in keeping with the general population) for every period up to 1919. Then, for the two and a half years prior to the 1921 census, there was a reversal of this trend. The higher percentage of males probably represented single migrant workers, who still lived only seasonally in Cape Breton, or married men who had not yet been joined by their families.<sup>38</sup> A likely pattern is one where married males established themselves in Cape Breton with their families after several years of sojourning by which time they had become experienced industrial workers with the opportunity for full-time employment. In 1921 there were several thousand Newfoundland-born in Cape

TABLE XV

Distribution of Newfoundland-born in Nova Scotia  
by Sex and Time of Arrival

Sex	Pre-1900	1900-10	1911-18	1919	1920	1921	Total
						(5mos)	
Male	1,103	1,673	1,728	325	610	266	5,705
Female	1,231	1,792	1,848	303	508	99	5,781
Total	2,334	3,465	3,576	628	1,118	365	11,747

Source: *Canada Census*, 1921, vol. 2, Table 61. pp. 376-7.

37 Once again I acknowledge the problems of generalizations based on a small sample. These findings are however very suggestive.

38 The differences in the breakdown by sex, between the annual reports or the sample and the census data, are reflective of the very different kind of information provided in each. The census data is a decennial "snapshot" of who is residing in a geographical area at a particular time. Only when they settled permanently or long-term in Cape Breton would most Newfoundlanders be included in the census. The census recorders could have also simply ignored migrants who were perceived to be transient, especially if they lived on company property. However, some seasonal migrants were no doubt included in the census.

Breton and other parts of Nova Scotia (principally Halifax), who had been living there since the 1890s and the first decade of the 20th century. The significance of the Newfoundlanders in Cape Breton, at least in terms of numbers, is more readily appreciated when one considers that many of these immigrants began to raise Nova Scotia-born families.

The Canadian government actively recruited Newfoundlanders, although the emphasis was on recruitment to the Canadian west, and in 1894 the federal government hired an agent, Charles Carlyle, to carry out its promotional work from St. John's.<sup>39</sup> The Canadian government also paid "bonuses" to steamship companies for every immigrant they brought to Canada from overseas,<sup>40</sup> but only after almost a decade of lobbying by Cape Breton Members of Parliament did the Canadian government finally begin subsidization of the Newfoundland operated Cabot Strait ferry in 1906.<sup>41</sup> The provincial government of Nova Scotia also encouraged immigrants, but it was almost solely concerned with attracting immigrants who could invest in agriculture and practically abandoned these efforts from 1880 to 1906.<sup>42</sup>

By far the most important work of recruiting in Newfoundland was carried out by agents of both the Dominion Iron and Steel Company and the Dominion Coal Company. The activities of the agents were facilitated by the fact that the Dominion group leased and mined large sections of the Bell Island ore field at Wabana. In 1903 it was reported that a Mr. Kelly left Newfoundland with "120 young men proceeding to Glace Bay" and that he "will return Tuesday for another contingent".<sup>43</sup> In 1907 another agent, W.S. Mearch, left Newfoundland on the 6 February crossing of the "Bruce" accompanied by more than 20 young Newfoundlanders.<sup>44</sup> The work of these agents was aided by advertising campaigns which, in times of high demand for labour, would see almost daily ads in some of the St. John's newspapers.<sup>45</sup> The companies apparently had assistance from community leaders in their recruitment efforts. In 1900 Rev. MacDonald of Glace Bay came to Newfoundland and, with the assistance of Rev. Murphy of Holyrood, returned to Cape Breton "with 100 men from Hr. Main to work at the

39 Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 5 April 1894, p. 754.

40 Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 4 May 1903, p. 1975.

41 Since 1897 the "Bruce" made three trips per week. After 1911, when it was irreparably damaged, the "Glencoe" and the "Invermore" together provided a daily service between Port Aux Basques and North Sydney. Malcolm MacLeod, *Nearer Than Neighbours: Newfoundland and Canada before Confederation* (St. John's, 1982), pp. 23-5; Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 7 June 1898, pp. 282-3.

42 Lipkin, "Reluctant Recruitment", p. 9.

43 *Evening Herald*, 18 March 1903. Other than the fact that he was recruiting men for the coal mines no further information was given about Mr. Kelly.

44 Canada, Department of the Interior, *Ships' Manifests* (North Sydney), 6 February 1907, RG 76, Reel T-520, NAC. No information was provided on Mr. Mearch.

45 See, for example, the *Evening Telegram*, 1 August 1902.

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mines".<sup>46</sup> Recruitment of a very informal nature also occurred at the outport level:

The young fishermen have got the craze for the Sydney Mines, and no increase in wages at the fisheries will prevent them from seeing the thing out. Some other boy belonging to the village has come back rattling his dollars, and displaying his gold watch, and he thus becomes the unconscious recruiting sergeant for Cape Breton.<sup>47</sup>

There were many varied and contradictory reports regarding the treatment and situation of the Newfoundlanders in Cape Breton. When C.W.B. Ayre of Newfoundland went to Sydney in 1899, he found the Newfoundlanders

well housed, in fact very well housed, when you come to consider the circumstances. They live in a well-constructed wooden-built house, capable of accommodating seventy-two men. At one end is the sleeping apartments, two sleep in each berth, next this is the dining-room, and next this is the kitchen. As I had some of the food and had seen it cooking I can vouch that it was good.... The men work from seven till six, with an hour for dinner. They are paid \$1.00 to 1.25 a day, and they pay \$3.00 a week for their board.<sup>48</sup>

On the other hand, when a reporter for the Sydney *Daily Post* visited the Coke Ovens district of Sydney, he found the "Newfoundlanders' shacks reeking with filth" and asserted that "The offal and refuse of these shacks are simply thrown about the door or in fact anywhere. The place is low and marshy and drinking water must necessarily be impure".<sup>49</sup> Neither account makes any mention of wives and children, suggesting that these were recently arrived migrant workers with no immediate family in Sydney, and both refer to "shacks" or company constructed bunk-houses, which were either company owned or located on company property. Although there was clearly some variation in the living conditions of Newfoundlanders in industrial Cape Breton, residents of both types of accommodation probably earned among the lowest wages paid by Dominion Iron and Steel Company (DISCO).<sup>50</sup> They probably worked at the coke ovens department or at some unskilled work which was located not much

46 *Evening Herald*, 27 August 1900

47 *Trade Review*, 21 March 1903. The *Trade Review* reported extensively on the fishing industry and appeared to represent the voice of the fish merchants. The comment about the futility of increasing wages in the fishery as a deterrent to emigration must be treated skeptically.

48 *Evening Telegram*, 21 November 1899. Mr Ayre was probably a member of the prominent St. John's merchant family.

49 *Daily Post* (Sydney), 6 June 1901.

50 *Ibid.*, 13 July 1904. At the steel plant "boy's wages" ranged from \$.67 to \$1.25 per day after the 1904 wage reduction. The laborer's rate was between \$1.26 and \$1.35.

more than a stone's throw from their "shacks" or bunkhouses. They probably also worked along side other immigrant groups and frequently shared the same accommodation with them.

The working conditions for most workers at the steel mill or coal mines were demanding and dangerous. They worked eleven to thirteen hours per day, at least six and often seven days per week. Immigrant laborers were generally given the most menial and dangerous of work, and Newfoundlanders were singled out by the *North Sydney Herald* for enduring the most accidents:

Fatal accidents have been too numerous at the works and collieries this summer, and in most cases the victims were Newfoundlanders. Almost every week a coffin is forwarded to some point of Newfoundland by the "Bruce" containing the remains of some unfortunate laborer whose life was cut short in some terrible manner.<sup>51</sup>

Quoting from a report that the "Bruce" had carried no less than 7,000 passengers from North Sydney to Newfoundland, the *Evening Herald* noted that "she has taken from this port [North Sydney] a corpse each trip. Her silent passenger list are principally Newfoundland laborers who have been killed at the different Cape Breton collieries".<sup>52</sup> The *Evening Herald* reported that no less than 16 fatal accidents occurred at Sydney in 1901 and that five of these were Newfoundlanders.<sup>53</sup> In 1903 the *Trade Review* reported that "to date, eighty-three men have lost their lives on the Sydney works, and of these forty-nine were Newfoundlanders".<sup>54</sup> The Sydney Record even claimed that "Though they are employed in large numbers about the works", Italians were never killed, while Newfoundlanders had "a propensity" for getting killed or injured.<sup>55</sup>

A.D. McLennan of Whitney Pier offered his own explanation of the high accident rate among Newfoundlanders:

If a foreman tells a Cape Bretoner to go to a dangerous work place he will not go, come what may. If a Newfoundlander is asked to go to work in dangerous places he will go whether he sees the danger or not, and in nine cases out of ten the Newfoundlander meets death.... It is getting so common now to hear of a Newfoundlander being killed at the steel works that no questions are asked. The foreman no doubt have little trouble with Newfoundland men. They are ready to jump at anything. If they are not

51 Cited in *The Evening Herald*, 25 August 1900.

52 *Ibid.*, 1 June 1903.

53 *Ibid.*, 3 January 1902.

54 *Trade Review*, 28 March 1903.

55 Cited in *Evening Herald*, 11 March 1903. Although one must treat such reports in the press with caution, the frequency of the reports regarding Newfoundland workers killed and injured is impossible to ignore.

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willing to jump they will be discharged.<sup>56</sup>

Other accounts blamed the steel and coal companies for their callousness. When “Archie Russel” was killed at the steel plant “by the careless [sic] of the officials”, no action was taken by the company, since Archie was “only a codman”.<sup>57</sup> When 19 year old Frederick Lambswood was killed in the Glace Bay mine, clergyman Walter R. Smith wrote to the editor of the *Evening Telegram*:

Fred was killed working for the company, and the company was supposed to have an inquest held over him, which there was nothing of the kind. There was no doctor to see him and bury him, and where he was buried it was just the depth of a coffin. That’s the kind of grave he was buried in; when the frost goes the birds will snatch him up. All that went to his funeral was three Church of England men;.... From what I have heard during the past two years, I am afraid that at these mining works in the Maritime Provinces, as well as in the United States, the lives of Newfoundlanders are held of little account.<sup>58</sup>

Because Newfoundlanders were white and British subjects they did not experience the same discrimination and racism that greeted other immigrants in Cape Breton. The fact that they could easily return to Newfoundland in times of high unemployment also made them more welcome,<sup>59</sup> but possibly less dependent on their employers in spite of their segregation from mainstream union and political life.<sup>60</sup> If they remained in times of high unemployment they could be accused of taking work from “native” labour and keeping wages low. One of these times was during the winter of 1903 when DISCO reduced wages by 10 to 33.3 per cent and laid off workers.<sup>61</sup> In a letter to the editor A.D. McLennan queried “why the Dominion Iron and Steel Company sends agents to

56 *Daily News* (St. John’s), 2 April 1904.

57 *Evening Herald*, 3 January 1902.

58 *Evening Telegram*, 27 December 1902.

59 Neary, “Canadian Immigration Policy”, pp. 72-3. The ability to export unemployment is viewed by Sassen-Koob as an advantage to Capital and the State since it exempts the economy from the need to provide infrastructure and services for seasonal workers and lowers the level of necessary social capital thus contributing to a higher average rate of profit. See “The Internationalization of the Labour Force”, pp. 22-3.

60 It has been asserted in some of the theoretical discussion on Migration that immigrant workers are virtually in a position of powerlessness since capital can act towards them as though “the labour movement did not exist”. See Immanuel Castells, “Immigrant Workers and the Class Struggles in Advanced Capitalism: The Western European Experience”, *Politics and Society*, 5, 2 (1975), p. 52. Others have pointed out though that the benefits to capital of worker powerlessness and low wages must be considered in relation to disadvantages such as high turnover and recruitment expenses. See Michael Burawoy, “The Functions and Reproduction of Migrant Labour: Comparative Material from Southern Africa and the United States”, *American Journal of Sociology*, 81, 5 (1976), p. 1056.

61 Crawley, “Class Conflict”, p. 86.

Newfoundland to get men to go to work at the steel works at Sydney, while men who are anxious to work settled right here, and have their homes cannot get a day's work from end to end of the steel plant?".<sup>62</sup> In 1901, when a group of Newfoundlanders were stranded in Sydney without work or money, it was reported that "most of them have friends living in the 'shacks' who are at work and give them what food they can spare, but this is very meager and all are reduced to dire straits.... the Nova Scotians and others are openly hostile to our people".<sup>63</sup> Newfoundlanders often competed with other immigrant workers for the lower paying unskilled work. A report in the *Evening Telegram* claimed that a group of Newfoundlanders who had arrived at Sydney were not successful at finding work because "a large number of Italians have come there lately.... Rows in the mess rooms are of frequent occurrence".<sup>64</sup>

In this early period Newfoundlanders were overwhelmingly unskilled, low paid workers who were highly mobile. In times of industrial conflict, such as strikes, they might participate as strikers, or as "scabs", or they could make the relative short return trip home to Newfoundland. In 1903 when mainly Italians and Hungarians struck the Coke Ovens department, "several Newfoundlanders" were among them.<sup>65</sup> In 1904 when the first plant-wide strike occurred at Sydney Steel, it was "Italians, Hungarians and Newfoundlanders" who made up the majority of strikers who "armed with clubs and bludgeons" confronted the strike breakers, while the majority of the skilled and native workers obeyed the Provincial Workmen's Association (PWA) and did not defy the militia and strikebreakers.<sup>66</sup> During this same strike, some Newfoundlanders also gave up the picket lines and returned home.<sup>67</sup> During the bitter strike of 1909, when miners were divided between allegiances to the PWA and the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), the Dominion Coal Company attempted to recruit Newfoundlanders as strikebreakers. F.W. Grey, presumably an agent of the Dominion Coal Company, went to Newfoundland with an offer to pay Newfoundlanders \$3.50-\$5.00 per day. The *Evening Chronicle* attempted to discredit the strikers by referring to them as "English, low-land Scotch, Belgians and Italians mainly, and the principles they appear to stand for are international socialism".<sup>68</sup> So threatening was the use of Newfoundlanders as strike breakers that Dan McDougall of the UMWA visited Newfoundland for several days with the purpose of dissuading workers from going to Cape Breton.<sup>69</sup>

62 *Daily News*, 2 April 1904.

63 *Evening Herald*, 15 June 1901.

64 *Evening Telegram*, 12 March 1900

65 *Daily Post*, 3 March 1903; *Morning Chronicle* (Halifax), 3 March 1903.

66 Joe MacDonald, "The Roots of Radical Politics in Nova Scotia: The Provincial Workmen's Association and Political Activity, 1879-1906", B.A. Honours thesis, Carleton University, 1977, p. 121.

67 *Evening Herald*, 6 June 1904.

68 *Evening Chronicle* (St. John's), 18 September 1909.

69 *Ibid.*, 14 September 1909. Although it is not known whether the company was successful in

Since Newfoundlanders, as well as most other immigrants, were largely unskilled, lower-paid workers who were pushed into the most hazardous jobs, they probably realized as well as other workers the injustice and exploitative nature of the work situation. The willingness and opportunity to change these conditions, however, probably depended on whether they were settled in Cape Breton or were seasonal workers still established in Newfoundland. It also depended on the level of solidarity with other workers and the level of militancy among the workers. The divisions among “native” and immigrant, and between skilled and unskilled mitigated against a united working class that could successfully confront the steel and coal companies.

Unlike other groups of foreign-born migrants in Cape Breton, Newfoundlanders were within a day or two journey from home and family. They were strangers in another country and yet home was “just there”. They endured economic exile (at least temporarily) in a foreign land and yet the reminders of home were ever present. The regular “Newfoundland Notes” column in the *Sydney Daily Post* and the thrice weekly arrivals of the “Bruce” bringing more Newfoundlanders, were a reminder that home was not that far away.<sup>70</sup> In a letter to the editor of the *Trade Review* one Cape Breton Newfoundlander demonstrated this attachment very well:

We Newfoundlanders, living in Sydney, are always on the lookout for Bruce days — Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays — for the mail brings us the papers with the accounts of doings in the old land.... The average Newfoundlander’s standard of time here is fixed by the trips of the Bruce, and if you ask one how long he has been in Sydney, he will probably reply “Three Bruces since...”.<sup>71</sup>

recruiting Newfoundlanders as strike breakers, that danger must have been very real to send a UMWA executive member to Newfoundland in the midst of a strike. Other research is just as inconclusive on this point. Dan Moore states that the company was very active in “searching out new sources of scab labour in the coal mining districts overseas, in the city of Montreal and in the tiny fishing communities of Newfoundland” (see Dan Moore, “The 1909 Strike in the Nova Scotia Coal Fields”, unpublished course paper, Carleton University, 1977, p. 95). Joseph Steele makes no reference to the Newfoundlanders as strikebreakers during the 1909 strike, asserting that the strikebreakers were mainly Europeans recruited from Montreal as well as from the Magdeline Islands. See Joseph Steele, “The Big Strike, 1909-1910”, M.A. thesis, Saint Francis Xavier University, 1960, unpaginated.

70 See for example, *Daily Post*, 12 June 1902. From a scan of this paper it seems that the column appeared once or twice a fortnight.

71 *Trade Review*, 14 November 1903. The extent to which the outport and industrial culture, or what David Frank, adapting the theoretical perspective of Raymond Williams, has called the residual and emergent culture, fused to create a uniquely Cape Breton Newfoundland culture is not clear. For an analysis of the influence of Scottish tradition on Cape Breton culture which utilizes these concepts see David Frank, “Tradition and Culture in the Cape Breton Mining Community in the Early Twentieth Century” in Kenneth Donovan, ed., *Cape Breton at 200: Historical Essays in Honour of the Island’s Bicentennial, 1785-1985* (Sydney, 1985), pp. 203-18.

Although as sojourners most Newfoundlanders did not become integrated into the larger working class community, they were warmly received by the coal and steel companies. The companies for the most part recruited the youngest and healthiest of working age Newfoundlanders to work twelve hours a day, seven days a week at some of the most dangerous, low paying and unskilled jobs. From the companies' perspective, a favorable aspect of employing Newfoundlanders was that they could be more easily dismissed when their labour-power was no longer required. Newfoundlanders were therefore actively recruited to perform undesirable and low paying jobs which "native" Cape Bretoners were unwilling to do. The unwillingness of native Cape Bretoners to accept or endure such jobs is compatible with the findings of Alan Brookes' study of out-migration from the Maritime Provinces which showed that with the collapse of the agricultural economy of the Maritime Provinces many Maritimers began a series of migratory moves from the rural areas to the small industrial towns of the region and then to urban centres outside the region which continued throughout the expansion period of the steel and coal industries.<sup>72</sup> The refusal of native Nova Scotians to accept such work made these positions available to Newfoundlanders who were more willing to endure them because of their connection to the Newfoundland fishery. Having access to such a large and relatively constant supply of cheap labour also probably relieved some of the pressure to introduce capital intensive technology as a means of increasing productivity and eliminating the least desirable jobs.<sup>73</sup>

Although the federal and provincial levels of the Canadian state did not participate directly in the recruitment or expulsion of Newfoundland migrant labour, the separation of the maintenance and renewal components of the labour force was to both governments' benefit. Since the families of Newfoundland workers would have placed an added burden on the relief, education and health care system of industrial Cape Breton, the cost and responsibility of this burden instead remained with the Newfoundland government, in so far as they took responsibility for such services.<sup>74</sup> The large mass of Newfoundland unemployed and working poor exerted a great deal of political pressure on the successive governments of Newfoundland. Although all governments had to decry the seriousness of the problem, emigration, especially of a seasonal nature, must have been welcomed by those seeking political stability.

72 Alan A. Brookes, "Out-Migration from the Maritime Provinces, 1860-1900: Some Preliminary Considerations", *Acadiensis* V, 2 (Spring 1976), pp. 33-4.

73 As Castells has remarked, "Immigrant workers do not exist because there are 'arduous and badly paid' jobs to be done, but, rather, arduous and badly paid jobs exist because immigrant workers are present or can be sent for to do them". Castells, "Immigrant Workers and Class Struggles in Advanced Capitalism", p. 54.

74 An important aspect of Newfoundland out-migration which is beyond the scope of this paper is the conditions under which the families of migrants lived and the strategies they pursued which enabled them to survive in Newfoundland while maintaining a system of migrant labour.



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Seasonal migration and the access to wage labour in Cape Breton allowed many Newfoundlanders to retain a connection to the fishery and other pursuits in Newfoundland because of the money brought or sent home. In turn the attachment of Newfoundlanders to a seasonal fishing industry buttressed the purchase of Newfoundland labour at a low price. However, the seemingly peaceful coexistence of wage labour in Cape Breton and petty commodity production in Newfoundland was by no means a conflict-free system which created a perfectly functional semi-proletarian work force.<sup>75</sup> The fish merchants and Newfoundland industrialists did not always benefit from emigration. When emigration levels were at their highest, Newfoundland employers had great difficulty finding people to perform certain types of work. The sealers, fishermen, Bell Island ore miners and other workers were in a position to demand and obtain higher wages and better working conditions.<sup>76</sup> The initiative for many of these changes came from workers who had been migrants working in Cape Breton and other centres. This experience no doubt furthered their education in trade unionism.<sup>77</sup> Ironically, however, one of the most important effects of the migration was that it created divisions within the Cape Breton working class. The success of the companies in limiting the gains of the steel workers and the coal miners was in part a result of their ability to continue with a course of development based on cheap migrant labour. Until Newfoundlanders and other immigrants became permanent residents of Cape Breton and integrated into the community, the importation of Newfoundland migrant

75 For a discussion of semi-proletarianization in the Maritimes see R. James Sacouman, "Semi-Proletarianization and Rural Development in the Maritimes", *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 17 (3), 1980, pp. 232-45.

76 The extent of migration provided some leverage to be used by Newfoundland workers in winning concessions from Newfoundland employers. Between 1890 and 1914 215 strikes occurred in Newfoundland. See Jessie Chisholm, "Strikes in Newfoundland, 1890-1914", in *Newfoundland History 1986: Proceedings of the First Newfoundland Historical Society Conference*, 16, 17 October 1986 (St. John's, 1986), p. 214.

77 The connection between trade unionism and strike activity in Newfoundland and the experiences of migrant workers was observed by the editor of the *Trade Review* who declared that "This strike [1902 Sealers] had its seed sown on Bell Island two years ago, and that seed has been watered by the men who have been working in Sydney for many months. Before the advent of the railway we knew nothing of the "hang-her-down" policy [the slogan of the Belle Island strikers]" (*Trade Review*, 15 March 1902).

labour remained both a means of keeping wage levels suppressed and of keeping the Cape Breton working class divided.<sup>78</sup>

78 By 1913 (1912 when you consider the reporting period) there was a significant reduction in immigration from Newfoundland (see Table IX). This downward trend continued into the World War I period (267 Newfoundland immigrants for the 1915 reporting year and only 183 for the following year). This corresponded with a downturn in the Canadian economy just prior to the war and new restrictions on immigrant labour which resulted in a general reduction in the number of all immigrants to Canada. See Annual reports of Immigration Branch for 1915-17. Although these restrictions were not imposed against Newfoundlanders with the same vigour it still had some effect. The Newfoundland government actually cooperated with the Canadian government by cautioning Newfoundlanders about the prospects of employment in Nova Scotia. See Neary, "Canadian Immigration Policy and the Newfoundlanders, 1912-1939", pp. 70-3. However, when the war was well under way, significant numbers of Newfoundlanders once again began to arrive in North Sydney (1,032 for the 1917 reporting year). Therefore the migration of Newfoundlanders and the attendant problems associated with it persisted beyond the period with which this paper is concerned.