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Out of a Clear Sky: The Mobilization of the Newfoundland Regiment, 1914-1915

MIKE O'BRIEN

IT CAME, AS ONE OBSERVER NOTED, “out of a clear sky.”¹ At 9:25 p.m. on 4 August 1914, the people of Newfoundland, then a self-governing colony of the British Empire,² were notified officially that they were at war with Germany and Austria-Hungary. With a population of slightly less than 250,000 people, 32,000 of them in the city of St. John’s, Newfoundland hardly counted as a major player on the world stage, and appeared quite unlikely to have any significant impact on the war in Europe. Most of the colony’s workforce was involved in the fishery, with smaller numbers employed in the mining and forestry sectors, as there was little in the way of manufacturing or other industry.³ Its government, led by Prime Minister Sir Edward Morris, was considered to be perilously weak, presiding over a polity sharply divided along regional, sectarian, and class lines.⁴ In terms of being a potential participant in an armed conflict, Newfoundland was, according to one source, “as complete an example of unpreparedness and pacifism as could be found in the world.”⁵ By the end of 1915, however, the 1st Newfoundland Regiment, an infantry unit composed entirely of Newfoundlanders, was in action at Gallipoli, and large numbers of Newfoundlanders were serving on warships of the Royal Navy. Before the war ended, the Newfoundland Regiment would serve with distinction in some of the conflict’s most savage battles, earning, in the words of one recent writer, “a reputation second-to-none as a battalion that could be entirely depended upon whatever the cost.”⁶ It was a remarkable and entirely unexpected accomplishment for a country with, as one British politician noted, “a population half that of Wands-worth.”⁷

Accounts of the history of Newfoundland’s military experience in World War I have long drawn heavily on Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson’s *The Fighting Newfoundlander*, an official regimental history published in 1963.⁸ While Nichol-

son's work is very impressive as far as such officially commissioned publications go, after the passage of several decades it tends to show its age, as it consists mainly of a traditional "battle narrative"⁹ with only a minimal amount of analysis. Most recently published work on the Newfoundland Regiment focuses mainly on questions of the war experiences of Newfoundlanders and the place of the war effort in Newfoundland's cultural memory.¹⁰ Robert J. Harding, for instance, has written on the centrality of the disastrous battle of Beaumont Hamel to the war's legacy in Newfoundland, and how that has shaped public memory of the war.¹¹ Such works contribute greatly to our understanding of the impact of the war on Newfoundlanders and on their country, but generally say little about how the Newfoundland Regiment came into being and why its administration took the form that it did, beyond a reiteration of elements of Nicholson's account. The only major work that studies in detail the administration of Newfoundland's war effort is an unpublished MA thesis from 1981 which looks at the work of the Newfoundland Patriotic Association.¹² The time seems to have come for a reconsideration of this aspect of Newfoundland's wartime history.

This paper will examine the mobilization and administration of the Newfoundland Regiment over the first year of the war, from its inception in August 1914 to its entry into combat in the Dardanelles campaign in September 1915. In the course of this examination, it will attempt to gain insight into the way in which a country without even the slightest degree of serious military preparation attempted to raise, organize, and train an effective fighting force. While Newfoundland succeeded in producing a fighting unit renowned for its dedication and bravery,¹³ the hasty and haphazard nature of the process of mobilization led to deficiencies in administration which would result in some difficult and divisive problems as the world conflict escalated. Certain measures taken, and in cases not taken, in the period of mobilization would come back to haunt Newfoundland in the later stages of the war, as the country was forced to adopt conscription in 1918, exacerbating an already acrimonious political climate. By the war's end Newfoundland would be left with little of lasting substance to show for its efforts other than a greatly expanded public debt. While these problems in no way overshadow the storied performance of the Regiment on the battlefield, they are a necessary part of any clear understanding of Newfoundland's part in the war and the war's part in Newfoundland history.

THE CALL TO ARMS

Britain's declaration of war against the Central Powers was greeted with enthusiasm by many Newfoundlanders, and nowhere was that enthusiasm greater than in the capital city. According to the *Mail and Advocate*, "thousands of citizens of St. John's paraded the streets singing patriotic songs," and large crowds visited the homes of the governor, the prime minister, and the French consul, as well as HMS

Calypso, training ship for the local branch of the Royal Naval Reserve.¹⁴ The degree of excitement in the city, said one contemporary writer, “could not have been greater if the enemy were at the entrance of Saint John’s harbour.”¹⁵ Within hours, an unofficial propaganda campaign in support of the Empire’s war effort was begun by the local press. Articles and editorials explaining the causes of the war, always from a decidedly British perspective, and emphasizing its importance to Newfoundland, quickly became a regular feature of St. John’s newspapers. Most dwelt at length on the evils of Prussian militarism, while a few speculated on the dire consequences of a possible German takeover of Newfoundland.¹⁶ The war effort was also promoted as a way to enhance Newfoundland’s position within the British Empire, on the grounds that the colony’s contribution would earn the country “a distinguished place in whatever scheme is developed for closer Imperial Federation when the war is over.”¹⁷ With the propaganda campaign in full swing, local businesses quickly took advantage of the outburst of patriotic fervour. A few days after the declaration of war, the Nickel Theatre put on a special show featuring pictures of warships and military leaders, and one local paper reported that “those present went wild over it.”¹⁸ By September, local bookstores were advertising newly arrived stocks of war-related books, soon followed by scores for patriotic songs.¹⁹ Considering this atmosphere of popular pro-war sentiment in the capital city, there could be little doubt that Newfoundland would endeavour to contribute to the military effort of the Empire.

Such a contribution was, however, much easier to advocate than to accomplish. Newfoundland hardly seemed likely to be able to raise a land force for overseas service, particularly given that there was no existing military organization in the colony.²⁰ Indeed, at the outbreak of World War I, the only official security forces in Newfoundland were the 100 men of the Newfoundland Constabulary.²¹ In the mid-nineteenth century, there had been a small garrison of imperial troops in Newfoundland, but this force had been withdrawn by the British government in 1870 on the grounds that its main task had become the prevention of civil disorder rather than the defence of the colony against foreign aggression.²² In the 1880s, the Colonial Defence Committee in London repeatedly urged the Newfoundland government to raise small units of infantry and artillery, for which the imperial authorities were willing to foot the bill. The government refused, however, fearing that Newfoundland, already smarting under the weight of a global recession, would eventually be forced to contribute to the upkeep of such a force. When the economy began to improve in the late 1890s, the government of Sir James Winter agreed to allow the establishment of a Royal Newfoundland Naval Reserve, on the condition that such a scheme would not interfere with the fishery.²³ The Naval Reserve would prove to be a success, growing to a strength of roughly 600 trained men by 1914.²⁴ No land forces, however, were established. A small number of Newfoundlanders had enlisted in the Canadian contingent during the Anglo-Boer War, but the country had rejected the idea of sending its own unit.²⁵ Although Governor Sir Henry

McCallum suggested the creation of a Newfoundland contingent in 1899, the government informed him that it would have been financially impossible.²⁶ The war of 1914, however, would be different.

Perhaps the nearest thing to a military force in Newfoundland in 1914 were the local cadet brigades, which were organized under the auspices of the four main religious denominations. The first of these was the Church Lads Brigade [CLB], formed by the Anglican Church in 1892. This was followed by the establishment of the Catholic Cadet Corps in 1896, and the Methodist Guards two years later. The smallest brigade, the Newfoundland Highlanders, was created by the Presbyterian Kirk in 1907.²⁷ These brigades consisted of boys aged 15 to 19, organized "for drill and athletic purposes, with a colour of military discipline." The brigades were established, however, "with no thought of war as a possible experience for their members."²⁸

The only other organization in Newfoundland with any militaristic inclination was the local branch of the Legion of Frontiersmen, a private paramilitary organization founded after the Anglo-Boer War by Roger Pocock, an ex-RCMP officer, and based in the United Kingdom. The Legion differed from the cadet brigades in that it was composed of adult men and was not affiliated with any religious denomination. The organization was open to any man over 18 years of age who had either "seen active service in a war, ... had training at sea [or] knocked about in the wilds." The Newfoundland levy of the Legion was formed in 1911 by Dr. A. W. Wakefield, a physician with the Grenfell Mission in Battle Harbour, Labrador. Units of Frontiersmen were established at St. John's, Greenspond, and St. Anthony on the island, as well as at Nain, Mud Lake, Hopedale, and Grand River in Labrador.²⁹ In 1912, the local Legion applied to the War Office for 50 rifles, but the request was turned down on the grounds that the Legion was a purely private venture and not part of any official system of imperial defence.³⁰ By 1914, the Legion had over 150 members in Newfoundland, "formed and trained for 'the Day,' which the Legion saw coming."³¹ On 7 August, Wakefield had informed Governor Walter Davidson that 50 men of the Legion of Frontiersmen were ready to go overseas to join the main body of the Legion in London, and transportation was quickly arranged through the War Office.³²

The general lack of preparedness was not enough to prevent Newfoundland's more vocal classes from demanding that Newfoundland "do its bit." In the first week of the war, without anything approaching sufficient time for a reasoned debate on the matter, it became clear that Newfoundland's contribution to the war would be far greater than anything which could have been predicted a few days earlier. Indeed, the local elite in St. John's almost instantly adopted the idea that the colony should raise its own overseas contingent, rather than simply provide volunteers for Canadian and British forces. Governor Davidson already had something similar in mind. On 8 August, he wired Colonial Secretary Lewis Harcourt requesting authority to raise troops in Newfoundland for service overseas, and permission to do so was

granted the following day.³³ Four days later, an “immense gathering of all classes” was convened in the CLB Armoury to hear Davidson announce his intention to raise a Newfoundland contingent of 500 men for service overseas, a proposal which met with “great enthusiasm.”³⁴ Davidson said that, since the colony was “poor in money vocal [but] rich in men,” such a unit would be Newfoundland’s most appropriate contribution to the war, and he expressed his hope that the contingent would eventually number 5,000 men.³⁵

While Davidson’s idea was well received, it posed some tough political problems. Public enthusiasm notwithstanding, the government was ill-prepared to undertake such a task, given that no bureaucratic or legislative mechanism existed in Newfoundland for enlisting, equipping, or administering military personnel.³⁶ In addition, Newfoundland’s political situation was extremely unstable, as the very legitimacy of the Morris government was disputed by many Newfoundlanders. While Morris’s People’s Party held a majority of seats in the House of Assembly, the opposition alliance of William F. Coaker’s Fishermen’s Protective Union [FPU] and John Kent’s Liberals had received a larger percentage of the popular vote in the 1913 election. Davidson, meanwhile, had little respect for the Newfoundland political system, and thought that the country would be better ruled as a crown colony.³⁷ The fractious nature of the colony’s politics, combined with the governor’s dismissive attitude toward the institution of responsible government, would profoundly affect the shape which Newfoundland’s contribution of military forces to the war would take.

In what has been aptly termed “a bizarre abdication of responsibility,”³⁸ the Morris government handed the entire business of creating and maintaining a contingent over to Davidson, who was more than delighted to take personal control of the war effort. A committee of 25 prominent citizens with Davidson as its chairman, christened the Newfoundland Patriotic Association, was formed to enlist and equip what was to become the 1st Newfoundland Regiment.³⁹ The idea behind the Association’s formation was, as Davidson later stated, to “place the conduct of all matters associated with the War outside the domain of party politics.”⁴⁰ Left unsaid by Davidson, but implicit in his approach to the matter, was the fact that it placed Newfoundland’s war effort outside the purview of responsible government.

The initial reception of Davidson’s initiative took on a partisan tinge, as was typical of almost any public venture in Newfoundland at the time. Pro-government newspapers welcomed the announcement of the formation of a Patriotic Association, saying that partisanship should be put aside and requesting a return to the days when “None was for a party / And all were for the State.”⁴¹ The arrangement had considerable appeal for Morris and his cohorts, since it allowed them to sidestep demands for a wartime coalition government that would have had to include Coaker.⁴² This did not satisfy the opposition. The *Mail and Advocate*, official organ of the FPU, denounced the patriotic meeting as a “partisan fraud,” meant to revive the sagging popularity of the Morris government. While the *Advocate* came out strongly in

support of a war to defend the world against Prussian militarism, and in particular embraced the need to save "brave Belgium,"⁴³ it complained about the lack of consultation with opposition parties and called the government's decision to hand over control of the war effort to a group of private citizens an admission of incompetence. The *Advocate* further questioned whether the entire country should be bound by the decisions of a gathering of the upper classes of St. John's.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, Davidson's "improvised department of war" continued to exercise complete control over the country's war effort until 1917, when a National Coalition Government established an official Department of Militia.⁴⁵

In order for the Patriotic Association to function in Newfoundland's rather acrimonious political environment, the government believed that it had to "be composed of people of all classes, and creeds, and shades of political belief." Its members were appointed judiciously, in order to ensure that no group felt left out.⁴⁶ The resulting body was, as Davidson put it, "well balanced," the 12-member Executive Committee being equally divided among Anglicans, Methodists, and Roman Catholics.⁴⁷ This denominational balance was essential if the project was to receive the endorsement of Newfoundland's powerful religious hierarchy. But while the Patriotic Association represented a cross-section of Newfoundland society in terms of religious affiliation, in socio-economic terms it did not. Its membership consisted almost entirely of men from the merchant and professional classes. Few came from the labouring classes of wage workers or fishermen, whose only representation was in the form of a handful of union leaders.⁴⁸

From the beginning, almost all of Newfoundland's politicians were quite vocal in their support for the idea of raising a contingent, though most would scrupulously avoid any direct involvement in recruiting.⁴⁹ One early dissenting voice was that of William Coaker. Although "an ardent Imperialist of the old-fashioned type" and a supporter of the war effort in general, Coaker was opposed to the whole notion of raising an infantry regiment, believing that Newfoundland would do better to expand the Naval Reserve and to increase its production of food for Britain. He added that Newfoundlanders who wanted to serve on land could join the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Eventually, however, once the Regiment had been created and "when it developed that the affair would be a long-drawn-out one," Coaker became one of the Regiment's most ardent supporters, and one of the few politicians who actively assisted in recruiting for the unit.⁵⁰ The Anglican and Methodist clergy, meanwhile, almost unanimously supported the war effort, as did most Newfoundland-born Roman Catholic priests and the Catholic archbishop, Michael F. Howley.⁵¹ Irish-born priests tended in general to be less enthusiastic, if not outright opposed.⁵² The women of Newfoundland also mobilized in support of the Regiment. On 31 August 1914, a Women's Patriotic Association [WPA] was formed, with over 500 members, including Lady Davidson as its president.⁵³ Over the next four years, the WPA would provide the men of the Regiment with woollen clothing and other comforts, as well as undertaking a variety of other war-related work.⁵⁴

A MOTLEY CREW: RECRUITING AND PERSONNEL

On 21 August, the governor issued an official proclamation, calling for volunteers to fight in “the greatest War in the history of the World.” Men between 19 and 35 years of age were asked to report to the CLB Armoury or to the nearest magistrate to enlist for overseas service “for the duration of the war, but not exceeding one year.” Passage to St. John’s was provided free of charge, and recruits were to be paid one dollar per day from the time of enrolment, the same rate of pay given to soldiers of the Canadian contingent.⁵⁵ Once the formation of a Newfoundland contingent was announced, the local Frontiersmen cancelled their plans to go to England as a separate unit and instead were incorporated into the Regiment. These men would form “the nucleus of the first contingent.”⁵⁶ Within a week of the official proclamation, 335 men had volunteered, almost all from the local cadet brigades.⁵⁷ Given the enthusiastic response of the cadets to the call for volunteers, local newspapers quickly recanted their earlier criticism of the cadet brigades, and proclaimed the cadet movement to have been a great idea all along.⁵⁸

The Patriotic Association had little trouble in meeting Davidson’s initial quota of 500 men, particularly since Newfoundland was suffering from a “commercial depression” which left many unemployed or underemployed.⁵⁹ Some joined out of a desire for employment, some for adventure, and some from a sense of duty. One member of the Regiment later provided a rather romantic description of the “motley crew” who answered the first call for volunteers:

The city brigades, composed of young, beautifully fit athletes from rowing crews, football and hockey teams, enlisted in a body. Every train from the interior brought lumbermen, fresh from the mills and forests, husky, steel-muscled, pugnacious at the most peaceful times, frankly spoiling for excitement. From the out harbours and fishing villages came callous-handed fishermen, with backs a little bowed from straining at the oar, accustomed to a life of danger. Every day there came to the armory loose-jointed, easy-swinging trappers and woodsmen, simple-spoken young men, who, in offering their keenness of vision and sureness of marksmanship, were volunteering their all. It was ideal material for soldiers.⁶⁰

According to one daily newspaper, the volunteers came “from all classes, from the ranks of the wealthy and the labourer, the scholar and the unschooled, the professional and the tradesman.”⁶¹ In fact, however, a disproportionate number of the initial volunteers came from the mercantile and professional classes of St. John’s.⁶² According to some writers, response to the call for volunteers would have been even greater if the war had not begun during the fishing season.⁶³

It quickly became clear that this early enthusiasm for the war was primarily an urban phenomenon. At least 80 percent of the men who formed the first contingent were from the two St. John’s electoral districts.⁶⁴ The volunteer movement was

barely three weeks old when complaints about the lack of outpost volunteers began to surface.⁶⁵ The problem was particularly noticeable in districts farther removed from St. John's. As one frustrated recruiting officer said of a tiny community in White Bay,

Sopp's Island is a terribly isolated place. For all the public service the residents get, they might well be forgiven if they failed to appreciate that they belonged to any Empire or to any group outside of themselves.⁶⁶

The situation was similar in Labrador. Dr. H.L. Paddon reported from Indian Harbour that, when the war broke out, most people in the community "did not know which side they were on," and that there was "much indifference and not a little treasonable talk." Many, indeed, on the grounds that they were receiving nothing from the powers that be in St. John's, suspected that they "couldn't be worse off if the Germans took the country."⁶⁷ Some outpost people were also suspicious of the motives of the newly created military authorities. Davidson later noted that "when we first sent a few piquets in 1915 to guard remote inlets ... the women drove their men ... into the scrub, fearing that the 'press gang' was out."⁶⁸

While recruitment for the Regiment was initially much higher in St. John's than in rural areas, it should not be assumed that the outports did not contribute to the war effort. The number of rural recruits began to increase after the fishing season ended. Also, since recruits were listed according to where they joined rather than their place of origin, some outpost men were officially registered as being from St. John's.⁶⁹ As well, of the roughly 2,000 men who served in the Naval Reserve during the war, almost all were recruited from the outports.⁷⁰ Another 505 men, again mainly from the outports, served in the merchant marine.⁷¹ Support for the war effort in the more remote outports, however, usually tended to come mainly from younger members of the community who had received formal education.⁷² While the influence of local leaders, such as clergymen, magistrates, and politicians, was an important factor in recruiting, as a general rule, the further a district was from St. John's, the fewer recruits it provided, at least in the first months of the war.⁷³

The discrepancy in recruiting between urban and rural areas can be accounted for at least in part by the socio-economic circumstances of the country. The number of men of military age available to recruiters was relatively lower in the outports than in St. John's, since the fishery required many able-bodied young men. Many people in fishing communities feared that the fishery would suffer if too many men volunteered.⁷⁴ Few St. John's residents, on the other hand, made their living directly from the fishery. High unemployment and low wages, combined with a steady influx of people from the outports, mainly young men, into St. John's, meant that there were a large number of men of military age in the city available for service overseas.⁷⁵ There was also more social pressure on city men to volunteer. Various

clubs and societies promoted recruiting, and propaganda was much more intense, particularly through the agency of the city's five daily newspapers.⁷⁶

To make service even easier for urban residents, most employers in the city agreed to keep volunteers' positions open, something which did not happen in the outport fishery. In late August, the government decided to supplement the pay of civil servants who volunteered for the Regiment, in order to bring their earnings up to the level of their civilian salaries, provided that their departments agreed that they could be spared.⁷⁷ Similar arrangements were later made for postal employees and for schoolteachers.⁷⁸ Pay was indeed a concern of many potential recruits. One man from Harbour Grace refused to enlist for one dollar a day, but said that he would be willing to go overseas for \$1.30. In response, one official remarked that "this kind of patriot ... is not very desirable."⁷⁹ The Government, however, was also thinking about money. While there were a number of married men among the volunteers, the government wanted to make sure that only unmarried men with no dependents were sent overseas, for fear that the latter would "become a charge on the funds of the Colony."⁸⁰

Once recruiting was underway, the organizers of the Regiment were faced with the problem of accommodating sectarian interests. While all volunteers initially enlisted as privates,⁸¹ in mid-September the Patriotic Association published a notice in local papers soliciting applications for commissions in the Regiment.⁸² The need for officers immediately raised the question of sectarianism, a hardy perennial in local politics. The policy of the Newfoundland government, dating back to the 1860s, was to allocate all government appointments and patronage on a proportional basis to Newfoundland's three main Christian denominations.⁸³ In keeping with that long-standing custom, the Patriotic Association adhered to the so-called "spoils system" when it came to the issue of promotions. The first group of ten officers commissioned by Davidson included three Roman Catholics, three Methodists, and three Anglicans, all of whom had been officers in the sectarian cadet corps.⁸⁴ To further prevent sectarian squabbling, Davidson appointed himself as interim Lieutenant-Colonel of the Regiment, until the unit was sent overseas and commanding officer could be appointed from the British Army.⁸⁵

The need to accommodate sectarian rivalries, however, would become an insurmountable obstacle when it came time to appoint a regimental chaplain, since the War Office refused to approve the appointment of three chaplains to one battalion. Unable for political reasons to choose between rival offers from the various denominations, the Patriotic Association decided that the Regiment would have to be sent overseas without the services of a chaplain.⁸⁶ This decision, however, did not go unchallenged. Father Thomas Nangle, chaplain of the Catholic Cadet Corps, immediately threatened to withdraw all Roman Catholics from the contingent. Although Nangle was persuaded to withdraw his threat, he insisted that the lack of a Roman Catholic chaplain was hurting recruiting, since many parents would not let their sons enlist unless there was a priest attached to the unit.⁸⁷ It was only in July

1916, after the disaster at Beaumont Hamel, that the War Office agreed to allow the Regiment three chaplains, including Father Nangle.⁸⁸

Along with the need to appoint regimental officers, the Patriotic Association also had to find men to supervise logistics and training for the nascent contingent. Only one of the volunteers had ever seen military action. Conn Alexander, who had served as a British officer in the Anglo-Boer War, happened to be in St. John's when war was declared and was one of the first men granted a commission in the Regiment.⁸⁹ One of Alexander's first tasks was the selection of non-commissioned officers for the Regiment from among the many volunteers.⁹⁰ Administration of the unit, meanwhile, became the responsibility of A.J. Montgomerie, local manager of Furness Withy Steamships and a former Canadian Militia officer. Montgomerie, a native of Halifax, would later draw criticism for retaining his civilian employment while holding the post of provisional commanding officer in the Regiment and for his being "an utter stranger" to the customs of Newfoundland society.⁹¹ Dr. Cluny MacPherson, Surgeon-General of the Methodist Guards and head of the local St. John Ambulance Brigade, was appointed Principal Medical Officer for the Regiment.⁹² His first task was to organize medical examinations for the volunteers, basing the criteria for service on requirements found in an old Admiralty Blue Book, the only source locally available on the matter.⁹³ MacPherson would go on to achieve fame in 1916 as the inventor of the box respirator gas mask used extensively by British forces.⁹⁴

Instructors for the contingent also had to be found locally. W.H. Rennie, treasurer of the Rifle Club, offered his services to the Patriotic Association, and was appointed to head the Musketry Committee, established to supervise arms training. Rennie had suggested in 1908 that the Newfoundland government subsidize the Rifle Club in order to prepare men for a possible war. At the time, the *Daily News* had condemned this idea, saying that rifle competitions were "the luxury of the well-to-do." By 1914, caught up in the patriotic fervour, the same newspaper admitted that it had been "in error," and offered unqualified praise for Rennie and his organization.⁹⁵ Joseph Moore, a former professional soldier with 21 years service in the British Army, was placed in charge of drill and musketry training.⁹⁶ Captain H. Ballantine Dykes, a British reserve officer who was in Newfoundland on a fishing trip, also lent his assistance to the Musketry Committee.⁹⁷ To these few men fell the herculean task of turning civilian volunteers into something resembling a military force.

By the time the first 500 men had been enlisted, Davidson and the Patriotic Association had already decided to expand the unit to a strength of over 1,000 in order to produce a full infantry battalion. Little or no thought was given to how such a unit could be sustained if the war lasted longer than the widely predicted matter of months. Nor was the question of making provisions for the replacement of casualties considered in the early stages of the war. Instead, all involved seem to have been caught up in the spirit of the moment, without regard to an uncertain future and

apparently without thinking about who might have to take responsibility for such matters at a later date. Recruiting for a second contingent began on 30 November, with drill commencing a week later.⁹⁸ Enthusiasm in St. John's was still high, and 179 men enlisted on the first day of recruiting.⁹⁹ The problem of maintaining voluntary recruitment, though, would come back to haunt the Patriotic Association in 1916, when the Regiment began to sustain major casualties.

NOT READY FOR PRIME TIME: EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING

Although recruiting for the Regiment was already well underway, the venture only received official sanction on 4 September, when the House of Assembly passed the Volunteer Force Act. Under the provisions of this legislation, the men of the Regiment were to be subject to the provisions of the Army Act of the British Parliament, with the exception of corporal punishment. Punishment by death was, however, to be allowed.¹⁰⁰ In the same session, the Assembly passed a War Measures Act, granting the Governor in Council wide-ranging powers of censorship, detention, and deportation, as well as making provisions for strict economic controls.¹⁰¹ The legislature also authorized the raising of a \$250,000 loan to pay for the equipment and maintenance of the Regiment.¹⁰² Administration was left in the hands of Davidson and the Patriotic Association.

The government's decision to pay the full cost of the contingent was based on the assumption that the war was unlikely to last more than a few months.¹⁰³ This was an understandable mistake, since many "experts" predicted that the war would be "the shortest on record."¹⁰⁴ The British government later agreed to use Army funds to pay for rations, as well as supply and maintenance of equipment, for elements of the Regiment on active service. The Newfoundland government was still responsible for pay, including pensions and allowances, as well as transportation to the UK and all expenses incurred by the Regiment within Newfoundland. In its first six months of existence, the Regiment cost the colony approximately \$320,000.¹⁰⁵

One of the most immediate difficulties encountered by the Patriotic Association was the need to procure proper arms for the Regiment, since the colony was completely unprepared in this regard. A handful of service rifles and some ammunition were obtained from *Calypso*, and the local cadet brigades provided some miniature rifles for target practice, but these were hardly adequate to even begin to outfit a 500-man infantry unit.¹⁰⁶ Davidson immediately appealed to the imperial authorities for assistance. In response, the War Office informed the government that it could only provide 100 rifles. Furthermore, since all existing stocks of the new short pattern Lee Enfield had gone to the British Army, they could only provide Newfoundland with rifles of the obsolete Mark 1 long pattern, which did not accept the latest service ammunition and was of little use for anything other than drill.¹⁰⁷ After considerable debate, the Musketry Committee decided to purchase

500 Canadian-made Ross rifles at the "exorbitant cost" of \$28 each, having received assurances from Canada that these weapons were "suitable in every particular."¹⁰⁸ One hundred revolvers, meanwhile, arrived from England on 29 August via SS *Pomeranian*, along with 29 pairs of binoculars and 1,000 shoulder badges.¹⁰⁹

As the size of the Regiment increased, the question of arming the force continued to pose problems, particularly with respect to machine guns. Needless to say, such weapons could not be found anywhere in or near Newfoundland. The Army Council in London agreed to make Vickers machine guns available to the Regiment, but only if the Newfoundland authorities were prepared to pay for them, at a cost of approximately \$2,000 each.¹¹⁰ Once again, the lack of any legal mechanism for sustaining an armed force posed an obstacle to the Patriotic Association, which was forced to solicit private donations for a Machine Gun Fund. On hearing of this problem, W.D. Reid, president of Reid Newfoundland Company, operators of the transinsular railway, donated two Vickers machine guns to the Regiment in January 1915.¹¹¹ This magnanimous gesture may have been intended to improve Reid's overwhelmingly negative image in the eyes of a considerable segment of the Newfoundland public. The *Advocate*, for instance, referred to the railway magnate as the most "despised or disliked man in the Colony," one who was "simply hated by the masses."¹¹² If this was Reid's intent, it seems to have worked, at least in some circles. The *Cadet*, a quarterly publication of the Catholic Cadet Corps, hailed his gift as the most significant private contribution to Imperial forces since Lord Strathcona's donation of a cavalry regiment for the Anglo-Boer War.¹¹³ Public response to the Machine Gun Fund, meanwhile, was so positive that the collection drive turned its attention toward an "Airplane Fund" to purchase warplanes for the Imperial forces. By the late summer of 1915, the fund had raised \$53,000. The government immediately purchased two Gnome-Vickers airplanes, at a cost of roughly \$10,000 each. After some discussion, the Patriotic Association decided to buy another airplane, along with six Vickers guns for the Regiment. Donations continued to come in and by 1917, five planes had been purchased for the British air services.¹¹⁴

If the armament of the Regiment in those early weeks left much to be desired, the rest of the unit's equipment was little better. The government decided that, wherever possible, clothing and equipment for the Regiment should be produced locally, in order to create employment for the people of the country.¹¹⁵ This policy, however, posed certain problems, since Newfoundland's manufacturing sector was small and at best rudimentary in its capacity for meeting new demands. It was quickly discovered, for instance, that the required khaki serge material for uniforms could not be procured in Newfoundland, so makeshift "fatigue uniforms" were produced locally, while greatcoats and Australian-style slouch hats, a type of military headgear made popular by the Anglo-Boer War, were ordered from Montreal.¹¹⁶ No khaki wool was available to make puttees, the type of leggings worn by British soldiers of the time, so navy blue wool had to be used, and for the remainder of the

war the men of the first contingent would be known as the “Blue Puttees.”¹¹⁷ The War Office, meanwhile, was unable to supply any regulation web equipment, and the regiment had to make do with haversacks made of white duck.¹¹⁸ According to Davidson, though, the Regiment’s “unprofessional appearance” was “less the result of unavailability of materials than [of] ignorance on the part of local officials as to how a soldier should be dressed.”¹¹⁹ This was hardly surprising, since, as one observer noted, “many of the people, in fact, had never even seen a soldier.”¹²⁰ By the time the second contingent was raised, the Patriotic Association had a slightly better idea of how to outfit a military force. The Newfoundland Clothing Company was given a tender to produce clothing of “Regular Khaki Serge ... made according to the Army Service Uniforms,” for delivery in early January.¹²¹

With the size of the contingent growing daily, the Patriotic Association had to find a suitable training ground for the new Regiment. An old cricket ground at Pleasantville, near Quidi Vidi Lake, was chosen as the site for the camp.¹²² Montgomerie was placed in charge of the establishment of Regimental Headquarters, and Captain W.H. Franklin was appointed Camp Commandant.¹²³ The local mercantile and manufacturing community was quick to assist with the creation of a military installation at Pleasantville, although their generosity would ultimately prove to be short-lived. The Anglo-American Telegraph Company installed telephones at the camp, and other local businesses made similar offers of equipment free of charge.¹²⁴ W.D. Reid, also feeling the patriotic spirit, offered all volunteers free passage on his company’s trains and steamers.¹²⁵ Meanwhile, there was a shortage of transportation to and from the camp, so the government put out a request for people with motor cars and chauffeurs to lend their vehicles to the Patriotic Association.¹²⁶

The men of the Regiment went under canvas on 1 September, the day after their official swearing-in.¹²⁷ By the time recruiting for the first contingent was suspended on 26 September, 970 men had enlisted, and 565 of them were in training at Pleasantville.¹²⁸ The training at Pleasantville Camp was also intended to weed out those who lacked “the powers of endurance for such work.”¹²⁹ Indeed, not all of the volunteers proved satisfactory. A few, once confronted with the discipline and discomfort of camp life, changed their minds about volunteering and were released. Others were discharged when they proved unsuitable “either from their conduct or from their inability to shoot.” Most of the volunteers, however, were found suitable for overseas service.¹³⁰ The early volunteers were also almost all medically fit for service, only three of the first 80 being rejected for health reasons.¹³¹ The rejection rate would rise rapidly after that, though, and by mid-September roughly 30 percent of volunteers had been rejected.¹³²

Not all of those who volunteered were welcomed at Pleasantville. In mid-August, a man named Franz Lüttge, described by Davidson as “a man of means and leisure and a stranger to Newfoundland who ha[d] recently taken up residence at Placentia in the neighbourhood of the marine cable station,” volunteered for service under the

assumed name of "Smith." There were soon reports of complaints from the rank-and-file about the presence of this "young man who had apparently been well drilled and was of foreign origin," and Lüttge was forced to resign his position as a private in the Regiment. He was subsequently placed under close observation, but "nothing of an incriminatory nature" was found.¹³³ Lüttge, a Manitoban of German descent and a former member of the Canadian Militia, was deported in 1915, becoming one of a number of "enemy aliens" who received harsh, and generally unfair, treatment from the authorities in Newfoundland.¹³⁴

Marksmanship training soon began in earnest. By the first week of September, the rifle range, located on the South Side Hills, was "in constant use from daylight till dark" under the supervision of the Rifle Association, despite problems with the outdated rifles which the men were forced to use.¹³⁵ There was also a problem with public safety, since the beginning of marksmanship training coincided with blueberry season in the area of the range. Stern warnings to berry-pickers were quickly placed in local papers.¹³⁶ By mid-September, the Regiment had begun "skirmishing expeditions" in the White Hills, preparing for battle, or at least for what they thought that battle would be like.¹³⁷ Given the enthusiasm in St. John's for all things connected with the war, Pleasantville Camp quickly became a local attraction, drawing hundreds of weekend sightseers.¹³⁸

As the summer of 1914 turned to fall, training at Pleasantville proceeded apace. While there was a slight lull in activity when most of the first contingent went overseas, by November large numbers of men were again entering the camp. The second contingent was originally scheduled to train for three night a week, but because of the pressing need for men in Britain, they went into continuous training at full pay as soon as they had signed up. As the winter grew closer, the men could no longer remain in tents at Pleasantville. St. John's recruits went home at night, while outpost men had to find their own lodgings.¹³⁹ Winter conditions soon made training much more strenuous, as men were forced to drill on icy streets.¹⁴⁰

Despite the unit's motley appearance, Davidson had high expectations for the volunteers, at least as far as his despatches to London can be taken as evidence of his beliefs. When he informed the Colonial Office of the Colony's intention of providing a contingent, he suggested that they "be sent to the Guards Depot and attached to the Foot Guards," since they were all "specially selected men, hard and hardy, enduring and disciplined and crack shots."¹⁴¹ He also claimed that every man in the Regiment carried "the proverbial Marshal's baton in his knapsack."¹⁴² Davidson's words of praise notwithstanding, the volunteers were hardly an elite military force. Very few of them had any clear concept of how an army was supposed to function. One officer noted that the Sergeant Major, while showing himself to be capable of improvement, lacked "the vaguest ideas of his duties as such or as a sergeant either."¹⁴³ It was obvious that the men required more preparation than could be had in St. John's.

ACROSS THE POND: THE REGIMENT OVERSEAS

The local authorities were well aware that the facilities at Pleasantville were hardly adequate to prepare men for actual warfare, and Davidson was anxious to have the Regiment transferred to the United Kingdom as soon as was possible.¹⁴⁴ Problems with the weather also emerged as soon as the summer came to a close. The men in the camp had an “unpleasant time” in one mid-September storm, when 40 tents were badly damaged.¹⁴⁵ Advised by MacPherson that “cold and exposure” at Pleasantville camp during the late fall would result in illness, Davidson asked the British government to approve a departure date of 7 October, the earliest time at which the Canadian-owned passenger vessel SS *Letitia* would be available to carry the Regiment overseas.¹⁴⁶ The British government, however, insisted that the departure of the Regiment be arranged to coincide with that of the convoy carrying the Canadian Expeditionary Force, which would pass St. John’s on 5 October. Since the owners of the *Letitia* were unable to arrange for the vessel to reach St. John’s before 7 October, and since the Admiralty would not allow the Regiment to delay its departure, alternative arrangements had to be made.¹⁴⁷

Because preparations for departure had to be rushed through, these proved to be, in the Governor’s words, “really quite inadequate,” particularly with regard to the choice of a vessel to replace the *Letitia*. In the absence of any properly fitted troopship, Davidson accepted Bowring Brothers’ offer of “the little *Florizel*,” a sealing steamer with capacity for 181 passengers, and thus poorly suited to the task of carrying over 500 soldiers overseas.¹⁴⁸ Living quarters on board were cramped and, because of a shortage of stewards and cooks, men of the Regiment were forced to perform ship’s duties.¹⁴⁹ Government officials and the press nevertheless tried to put a positive spin on the situation, celebrating the fact that the Regiment was leaving on one of Newfoundland’s own ships, with a crew who were “all of their own country.”¹⁵⁰ Because of concerns that enemy submarines might be operating off the coast of Newfoundland, the government imposed strict censorship on any details of the Regiment’s impending departure.¹⁵¹ The Governor also ordered that no “suspect person” be allowed to leave the Colony in the 10 days prior to embarkment, and that all “enemy aliens” be closely watched.¹⁵²

The first contingent of the Regiment boarded the *Florizel* on 3 October, being seen off by one of the largest public gatherings in the history of St. John’s.¹⁵³ According to reporters at the scene, the constabulary and naval reservists from *Calypso* had their hands full trying to control the huge crowd assembled on the pier.¹⁵⁴ In a farewell letter, one officer thanked those who had seen the Regiment off, and expressed his hope that the Regiment would “acquit themselves so as to bring no discredit to the country whose name they bear.”¹⁵⁵ With the ceremonies completed, the men of the contingent set off for what they thought was “the Great Adventure.”¹⁵⁶ Ironically, the long-awaited Ross rifles arrived on the Reid Newfoundland Company’s express train twelve hours after the departure of the *Florizel*. The rifles

were despatched to England the next day on board SS *Durango*.¹⁵⁷ The Regiment's slouch hats, meanwhile, had arrived earlier in the day aboard SS *Mongolian*, but could not be located among the ship's cargo in time to be distributed to the men on the *Florizel* or, indeed, to join the Ross rifles on the *Durango*.¹⁵⁸

Although there had been some concerns about shipboard discipline before the *Florizel's* departure, the men were remarkably well-behaved and, surprisingly to some, remained sober. Only one man was punished for insubordination. Shortly before the *Florizel* reached England, Alexander was informed that all equipment was to be dyed khaki. The men had to use an improvised "concoction of brown sugar" to colour their white haversacks.¹⁵⁹ On 16 October, the *Florizel* landed at Devonport, and the 540 men of the Regiment were despatched immediately to Salisbury Plain.¹⁶⁰ When the Newfoundland contingent first arrived in England, they were attached to the 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade at Salisbury Plain, and Lt.-Col. E.B. Clegg of the Peterborough Rangers was appointed their temporary Commanding Officer. This assignment did not sit well with the men of the Regiment, however, since they felt that their distinct identity was being submerged within the much larger Canadian contingent.¹⁶¹ Not only were the Newfoundlanders jealous of their identity, their attitude reflected the fact that relations between Newfoundland and Canada were somewhat less than rosy at the time, due in no small measure to the ongoing territorial dispute over Labrador.¹⁶² Consequently, the men of the Regiment wished to be separated from the Canadians at the earliest possible date.¹⁶³

In order to satisfy the desires of the men with regard to where they would be brigaded, the Newfoundland Regiment was despatched to Scotland and placed under the command of a British regular army officer, Lt.-Col. R. de H. Burton of the Middlesex Regiment.¹⁶⁴ On December 8, the Regiment arrived at Fort George Barracks, near Inverness for further training.¹⁶⁵ In Scotland, the Regiment's makeshift blue puttees quickly earned them the nickname "Blacklegs."¹⁶⁶ Although most assessments of the Regiment were positive, in terms of potential if not actuality, some observers expressed doubts. One British officer called the Regiment, "the most undisciplined lot he had ever seen," a description in which many of the Newfoundlanders, "who, until their enlistment had said 'Sir' to no man," took considerable pride.¹⁶⁷

The men of first contingent were joined early in the new year by another batch of eager Newfoundlanders. The second draft of the Regiment, consisting of nearly 250 men, embarked for Edinburgh on 5 February 1915 aboard the SS *Dominion*, though not without difficulty. Ice floes prevented the White Star liner from entering St. John's harbour, so the men had to be shuttled from the pier to their transport ship on the sealing steamer *Neptune*.¹⁶⁸ A third draft of volunteers departed on 22 March, aboard SS *Orduna*, bringing the strength of the Regiment in Scotland to over 1,000 men.¹⁶⁹ This brought the unit up to the full wartime establishment of a British Army infantry battalion.

Once ensconced in Scotland, the Newfoundlanders were quick to assert their distinct national identity. They objected to being described as “Canadians,” although they claimed to bear no “ill-will against their neighbouring Colonials.” They were, for instance, not particularly impressed when an Inverness newspaper referred to them as “the Newfoundland section of the Canadian Contingent,” even though the paper’s comments were otherwise complimentary. The *Daily News* responded to its Scottish counterpart by saying that “Newfoundland is grateful for the kind expressions, but Newfoundlanders are not Canadians.”¹⁷⁰ Similar sentiments were expressed when a British military band played “The Maple Leaf Forever” to welcome the Regiment to Fort George. On hearing of this, one person in St. John’s wrote that “they might as well have played ‘Yankee Doodle.’”¹⁷¹ Not long after this incident, the Regiment adopted “The Banks of Newfoundland” as its regimental march.¹⁷²

In the summer of 1915, the Regiment was still stationed in Scotland when a more serious problem than regimental marching music arose. According to the Volunteer Force Act, the men had signed on for a period of one year, after which they would be free to leave.¹⁷³ With the end of the first year of the war drawing closer, the government had to decide whether or not to go back on its word. In the end, the authorities agreed that the provisions of the act had to be respected, though not without conditions. While Davidson agreed that anyone desiring a discharge would be granted one, he insisted that the government would be under no obligation to take care of men, or the dependents of men, who refused to re-enlist.¹⁷⁴ The men were also under a great deal of social pressure to remain in uniform, both from their peers and from those at home, so almost all chose to re-enlist. The 23 men who refused to re-enlist met with a very unfriendly reception when they returned to Newfoundland, the public attitude toward them being so hostile that, according to Davidson, they “all left their homes and scattered abroad.”¹⁷⁵

Questions were also beginning to surface in 1915 as to the wisdom of the Musketry Committee in deciding to equip the Regiment with the now-controversial Ross rifle. In January 1915, Lance Corporal C.F. Garland wrote home from Scotland, saying that while “the Ross Rifle is just as good, if not superior, to the Lee Enfield at target practice, ... we are doubtful if it is as good as a service rifle.”¹⁷⁶ The accurate but very delicate Ross rifle, the adoption of which had been a pet project of Canadian Militia Minister Sam Hughes, was by that time proving to be almost worthless under battlefield conditions as it tended to jam when fired rapidly. By the spring of 1915, Canadian troops on the western front were discarding their Ross rifles in favour of Lee Enfields taken from dead British soldiers.¹⁷⁷ Despite growing complaints from troops overseas, back in Newfoundland the Musketry Committee was authorized by the Patriotic Association to place another order for 200 Ross rifles on 16 September 1915.¹⁷⁸

Problems with the Ross rifle were less politically damaging, however, than the emergence in October 1915 of accusations of sectarianism with regard to promo-

tions in the Newfoundland Regiment. While promotions in St. John's had been allocated in accordance with the "spoils system," this local political custom was not adhered to by British military authorities overseas. On 30 October 1915, P.T. McGrath, a prominent Roman Catholic member of the Patriotic Association, complained in the *Evening Herald* that of 22 commissions granted in Scotland, only three had gone to Catholics. McGrath claimed that the disparity was the result of bigotry on the part of certain officials, and demanded that Catholics in the Regiment be given a "square deal."¹⁷⁹ Counter-charges were quickly forthcoming, however. Coaker's paper, the *Mail and Advocate*, accused McGrath of deliberately stirring up "sectarian agitation" with the purpose of mobilizing Catholic voters against prohibition, which Coaker and the FPU strongly supported.¹⁸⁰ Meanwhile, in response to the growing controversy, Lt.-Col. A.W. Whitaker, commander of the regimental depot at Ayr, insisted that there was no truth to rumours that sectarianism played a role in the promotions of either commissioned or non-commissioned officers.¹⁸¹ Resentment over the promotion question, however, would continue into 1916.¹⁸²

The controversy over promotions was not the only scandal which plagued the Regiment in 1915. A number of complaints arose over what many saw as the rather shoddy administration of the war effort. As early as November 1914, there had been complaints that the Regiment's administrative services were poorly organized, resulting in delays of payments to families of men overseas, which led to a rather heated "newspaper campaign" against the Regiment's paymaster, Captain Timewell.¹⁸³ In the fall of 1915, further serious rumours began to reach St. John's, concerning inadequate clothing and rations issued to men overseas. The *Mail and Advocate* blamed the Patriotic Association, and by extension the Morris government, for not doing enough to ensure the comfort of the men overseas.¹⁸⁴ Some critics even alleged that the Government's recent insistence on maintaining strict press censorship was an attempt to hide from the Newfoundland people the fact that the food and clothing provided the Regiment was inadequate.¹⁸⁵ Faced with intense criticism, the Regiment conducted an inquiry into the state of supply, at which officers and men testified that there were few real problems.¹⁸⁶ While the Patriotic Association managed to straighten matters out enough to assuage most public criticism, some observers noted that the widespread circulation of these stories were adversely affecting the recruiting effort.¹⁸⁷ Meanwhile, a Newfoundland War Contingent Association [WCA] was formed in London in September 1915, led by a number of prominent individuals with connections to Newfoundland, to take charge of providing for the "welfare and comfort" of Newfoundlanders on active service overseas. The WCA was, like the Patriotic Association back at home, a purely private organization, outside the purview of the Newfoundland government.¹⁸⁸

While rumours and scandals created problems for the administration in St. John's, the men of the Regiment were by mid-1915 becoming rather restless in

Scotland. Wakefield complained that living conditions in Edinburgh were of “almost too high a standard to form good training for the trenches.”¹⁸⁹ Newfoundland soldiers were jealous of the fact that Canadians, Australians, and New Zealanders had already seen action. According to John Gallishaw,

The Newfoundlanders felt that as colonials they had been overlooked. They were not militaristic, and they hated the ordinary routine of army life, but they wanted to do their share.¹⁹⁰

Wakefield also remarked that “we have not yet heard of any V.C.s or D.S.O.s having been granted for [our] brilliant defence of [Fort George].”¹⁹¹ Before the summer ended, the men would get their wish. On 20 August 1915, one year less a day from the official proclamation of the creation of the 1st Newfoundland Regiment, four companies of the Regiment boarded SS *Megantic* at Portsmouth and set sail for the Mediterranean.¹⁹²

In Egypt, the 1st Newfoundland Regiment was assigned to the British 29th Infantry Division, a formation made up almost entirely from regular units of the British Army, most of which had been stationed overseas at the outbreak of the war. Tossing a battalion of civilians, from the colonies no less, into the midst of thousands of hardened professional soldiers would seem to have been a rather questionable move. At first, the British troops of the division were less than enamoured of their new comrades. They had little faith in the military abilities of the Newfoundlanders, and for a time there was considerable tension. One particular point of contention was that the Canadian rate of pay received by the Newfoundlanders amounted to five times the shilling a day given to British soldiers. The Newfoundland Regiment soon found themselves christened the “Fucking Five Bobbers.”¹⁹³

On 19 September 1915, slightly over a year after Governor Davidson first put out the call for volunteers, the Regiment landed at Suvla Bay to take part in the final stages of the Gallipoli campaign. Once in the front lines, they soon won the admiration of their British commanders, as well as of the other soldiers in the 29th Division.¹⁹⁴ After the end of the failed campaign at the Dardanelles, the 29th Division, Newfoundlanders still included, would move to the Western Front in the spring of 1916 and begin preparations for the Somme offensive. The service record of the Regiment has been described at length elsewhere,¹⁹⁵ and need not be recounted here. Suffice to say that the military performance of the motley crew assembled by Davidson and the Patriotic Association exceeded all expectations, proving themselves, in the words of Field Marshall Haig, to be “better than the best.”¹⁹⁶ Given the Regiment’s very unorthodox beginning, and the haphazard nature of its mobilization, the success achieved in turning Newfoundland’s volunteers into an effective and coherent fighting unit is little short of amazing. The Regiment’s record also shows that a culture steeped in militarism is not a necessary adjunct to success in war.

CONCLUSION

The way in which the Newfoundland Regiment was raised would, however, lead to serious problems in the years after 1915. While the enthusiasm for the war which had swept the capital city in 1914 had enabled the unit to be brought quickly up to full strength, once the Regiment began to sustain serious casualties the problem of recruiting became acute. By 1917, it was clear that Newfoundland lacked the demographic base to maintain a regiment in the field through voluntary recruiting. Combined with a continuation of the string of scandals which plagued the Regiment's administration in late 1915, the collapse of recruiting undermined the legitimacy of the constitutionally nebulous Patriotic Association. In August 1917, a new National Coalition Government was formed and responsibility for the Regiment's administration placed under a Department of Militia.¹⁹⁷

Because of its "unofficial" status, the Patriotic Association had been able to do little about the shortage of recruits other than appeal to public patriotism. By the end of 1917, this had proved utterly inadequate in sustaining the Regiment in the field. The government, however, was reluctant to adopt conscription, given widespread public opposition to any such measure. The matter came to a head, however, on 21 March 1918, when a massive German offensive on the Western Front threw the British Army into disarray. Given the deteriorating military situation and the removal of the badly undermanned Royal Newfoundland Regiment from the front lines, the government had little choice but to vote on 11 May 1918 to impose conscription. The resulting debate further polarized Newfoundland's already fractious political situation. As well, in a final irony, the war ended before any of the conscripted men could see action.¹⁹⁸

The war would also have a destructive effect on Newfoundland's fragile economy. While wartime conditions resulted in an expansion of trade,¹⁹⁹ the cost of the war effort would greatly increase Newfoundland's public debt. It was estimated that the Newfoundland Regiment alone cost the country over \$16 million over the course of the war.²⁰⁰ In the 1930s, this debt load would be the leading factor in Newfoundland's loss of self-government. While many people in Newfoundland believed in 1914 that a wholehearted war effort would lead to the achievement of nationhood, in the end such an effort led to the opposite. The accomplishments of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, however, still hold a cherished place in the country's history.

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Notes

¹John Gallishaw, *Trenching at Gallipoli: The Personal Narrative of a Newfoundlander with the Ill-fated Dardanelles Expedition* (New York: The Century Co., 1916), 3.

²The title "Dominion" was not officially adopted until 1917, though Newfoundland already enjoyed *de facto* dominion status. *Canadian Annual Review [CAR]*, 1917, 187.

³Arthur Silva White, "Newfoundland: A Study in Regional Geography," *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 30 (1914), 121-122.

⁴For a useful discussion of Newfoundland's political situation, see S.J.R. Noel, *Politics in Newfoundland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 95-122.

⁵P.T. McGrath and Charles Lucas, "Newfoundland," *The Empire at War*, ed. Charles Lucas (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), 311.

⁶Arlene King, "Beaumont Hamel: Our Place in the Somme," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 96.2 (2003), 13.

⁷*Debates* (House of Commons, UK), 3 August 1916, 637-638.

⁸G.W.L. Nicholson, *The Fighting Newfoundlander* (London: Government of Newfoundland, 1963).

⁹For a seminal discussion of battle narrative and its shortcomings, see John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (London: Viking, 1976), 62-73.

¹⁰P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "War, Memory and the Newfoundland Regiment at Gallipoli," *Newfoundland Studies* 15 (1999), 176-214; David R. Facey-Crowther, "Home is Where the Heart Is: The Correspondence of Newfoundland Soldiers in the Great War," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 96.2 (2003), 32-39.

¹¹Robert J. Harding, "Glorious Tragedy: Newfoundland's Cultural Memory of the Attack at Beaumont Hamel, 1916-1925," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 21 (2006), 3-40.

¹²Patricia Ruth O'Brien, "The Newfoundland Patriotic Association: The Administration of the War Effort, 1914-1918," MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1981.

¹³For a discussion of some of the reasons for the strong performance of the Newfoundland Regiment, see Andrew D. Parsons, "Morale and Cohesion in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment 1914-18," MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1995.

¹⁴*Mail and Advocate [MA]*, 7 August 1914, 4. *Calypto* was renamed HMS *Briton* in 1916.

¹⁵Richard Cramm, *The First Five Hundred* (Albany: C.F. Williams and Son, 1921), 20.

¹⁶Arthur Selwyn-Brown, "Newfoundland and the War," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 14.4 (1915), 2-4. For a warning of German designs on Newfoundland, see *Daily News [DN]*, 19 December 1914, 5.

¹⁷Selwyn-Brown, "Newfoundland and the War," 5.

¹⁸*DN*, 10 August 1914, 3; 11 August 1914, 3.

¹⁹*DN*, 9 September 1914, 5; 2 December 1914.

²⁰R.H. Tait, *Newfoundland: A Summary of the History and Development of Britain's Oldest Colony from 1497 to 1939* (New York: Harrington Press, 1939), 190.

²¹*Canada*, 13 November 1915, 202.

²²Colonel C.P. Stacey, "The Withdrawal of the Imperial Garrison from Newfoundland, 1870," *Canadian Historical Review* 17 (1936), 147-158.

²³James E. Candow, "The Defense of Newfoundland, 1870-1918," *Newfoundland History 1986* (St. John's: Newfoundland Historical Society, 1986), 118; P.T. McGrath, "Colonial Naval Reserves," *Canadian Magazine* 20 (1903), 534-536.

²⁴Christopher A. Sharpe, "The 'Race of Honour': An Analysis of Enlistments and Casualties in the Armed Forces of Newfoundland, 1914-1918," *Newfoundland Studies* 4 (1988), 42-43. Members of the Naval Reserve would be the first Newfoundland servicemen to see action in the war. For an outline of the Naval Reserve's part in the war, see Bernard Ransom, "Nursery of Fighting Seamen? The Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve, 1901-1920," *A Nation's Navy: In Quest of Canadian Naval Identity*, ed. Michael L. Hadley, Rob Huebert, and Fred W. Crickard (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 239-255.

²⁵Gallishaw, *Trenching*, 3-4.

²⁶Nicholson, *Fighting Newfoundlander*, 90.

²⁷Nicholson, *Fighting Newfoundlander*, 92-94.

²⁸Tait, *Newfoundland*, 193.

²⁹O'Brien, "Patriotic Association," 29; Nicholson, *Fighting Newfoundlander*, 97; *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador [ENL]*, Vol. 2, 426.

³⁰Public Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador [PANL], GN 2/14 (Colonial Secretary's Office), Box 14/28: Watson to Williams, 30 March 1912; Nicholson, *Fighting Newfoundlander*, 97.

³¹*Canada*, 29 December 1917, 378.

³²Tait, *Newfoundland*, 191.

³³Cramm, *First Five Hundred*, 19-20.

³⁴Alex A. Parsons, "Patriotism and What it Means: The Departure of the Newfoundland Regiment," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 14.3 (1914), 4.

³⁵"Newfoundland's Contingent," *United Empire* 7.4 (1916), 276. The selection of the initial target of 500 volunteers was purely arbitrary, since the government had "no immediate conception" of how much manpower was available. Tait, *Newfoundland*, 192.

³⁶Parsons, "Patriotism," 5.

³⁷Ian D.H. McDonald, *To Each His Own: William Coaker and the Fishermen's Protective Union in Newfoundland Politics, 1908-1925*, ed. J.K. Hiller (St. John's: ISER, 1987), 47-49.

³⁸Noel, *Politics*, 121

³⁹*Evening Telegram [ET]*, 13 August 1914, 8. The committee was later increased to 50 members. Nicholson, *Fighting Newfoundlander*, 103.

⁴⁰PANL, GN 1/3/A (Governor's Office: Miscellaneous and Local Correspondence), Despatch 1917/36, Davidson to Long, 17 July 1917. See also A.B. Keith, *War Government of the British Dominions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), 134-135.

⁴¹*DN*, 14 August 1914, 4.

⁴²Noel, *Politics*, 121.

⁴³*MA*, 7 August 1914, 4.

⁴⁴*MA*, 14 August 1914, 4.

⁴⁵*Canada*, 22 December 1917, 343.

⁴⁶*Newfoundland Quarterly [NQ]*, 17.1 (July 1917), 1.

⁴⁷PANL, GN 1/3/A, 1917 Despatch 36: Davidson to Long, 17 July 1917.

⁴⁸O'Brien, "Patriotic Association," 39, 43.

⁴⁹O'Brien, "Patriotic Association," 112.

⁵⁰Sir W.F. Coaker, *Twenty Years of the Fishermen's Protective Union of Newfoundland, from 1909-1929* (St. John's: Advocate Publishing, 1930), 109; J.R. Smallwood,

Coaker of Newfoundland: The Man Who Led the Deep-Sea Fishermen to Political Power (London: Labour Publishing Company, 1927), 42-43.

⁵¹Colonial Office Archives, Series CO 194/293, Davidson to Long, 23 July 1917.

⁵²McDonald, *To Each His Own*, 69.

⁵³*DN*, 1 September 1914, 5; Selwyn-Brown, "Newfoundland's Part in the War," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 18.3 (1918), 11-12.

⁵⁴On the work of the WPA, see Gale Denise Warren, "The Patriotic Association of the Women of Newfoundland: 1914-18," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 92.1 (1998), 23-32.

⁵⁵*ET*, 22 August 1914, 5.

⁵⁶Tait, *Newfoundland*, 192.

⁵⁷*ET*, 28 August 1914, 4.

⁵⁸*DN*, 31 August 1914, 4.

⁵⁹McGrath and Lucas, "Newfoundland," 298.

⁶⁰Gallishaw, *Trenching*, 4.

⁶¹*DN*, 31 August 1914, 4.

⁶²*CAR*, 1915, 154.

⁶³Cramm, *First Five Hundred*, 19.

⁶⁴Sharpe, "Race of Honour," 37. A similar situation existed in Ontario, where the vast majority of early recruits came from the cities. Barbara Wilson, *Ontario and the First World War, 1914-1918* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1977), xlix. The volunteers who came forward in Britain in August 1914 were also disproportionately urban. Clive Hughes, "The New Armies," *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War*, ed. Ian F.W. Beckett and Keith Simpson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 102.

⁶⁵*DN* 10 September 1914, 3.

⁶⁶*ET*, 8 January 1918, 7.

⁶⁷PANL, GN 2/14, Box 13/1: Paddon to Montgomerie, 10 July 1917. Such sentiments were not unique to Newfoundland. Recruiters in Cornwall also reported that some local people felt that they would be no worse off under the Germans than under the English. See Denis Winter, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (London: Penguin, 1978), 28.

⁶⁸CO 194/293, Davidson to Long, 23 July 1917. If true, this story indicates a fairly long cultural memory in rural areas, since press gangs had been abolished a century earlier.

⁶⁹PANL, MG 632, File 25, Montgomerie to Oke, 30 October 1914.

⁷⁰Sharpe, "Race of Honour," 42.

⁷¹Sharpe, "Race of Honour," 52.

⁷²CO 194/293, Davidson to Long, 23 July 1917.

⁷³O'Brien, "Patriotic Association," 124.

⁷⁴"Newfoundland Patriotic Association Report," *Journal of the House of Assembly [JHA]*, 1916, 317; PANL, GN 1/10/2 (Royal Newfoundland Regiment), "Extracts from Recruiting Reports," 1918.

⁷⁵Sharpe, "Race of Honour," 38.

⁷⁶P.T. McGrath, "Why Recruiting is Low Outside St. John's," *Cadet* 2.2 (1916), 29.

⁷⁷PANL, GN 2/14, Box 9/10, Bennett to Woods, 28 August 1914.

⁷⁸PANL, GN 2/14, Box 9/11, Bennett to Woods, 9 September 1914; Bennett to Blackall, 10 September 1914.

⁷⁹PANL, MG 632 (Patriotic Association of Newfoundland), File 25: Montgomerie to Oke, 30 October 1914.

⁸⁰PANL, GN 2/14, Box 9/11, Bennett to Davidson, 18 September 1914.

⁸¹*Canada*, 13 November 1915, 202.

⁸²Nicholson, *Fighting Newfoundlander*, 112.

⁸³Noel, *Politics*, 24-25. In 1911, Newfoundland's population included 81,177 Catholics, 78,616 Anglicans and 68,045 Methodists. White, "Newfoundland," 122.

⁸⁴The tenth officer was from the Legion of Frontiersmen. O'Brien, "Patriotic Association," 73.

⁸⁵*ET*, 21 September 1914, 4.

⁸⁶*DN*, 7 October 1914, 5; O'Brien, "Patriotic Association," 179.

⁸⁷PANL, MG 632, File 22, Nangle to Davidson, 1 December 1914.

⁸⁸O'Brien, "Patriotic Association," 181.

⁸⁹O'Brien, "Patriotic Association," 72.

⁹⁰*ET*, 19 November 1914.

⁹¹O'Brien, "Patriotic Association," 60-62; *Evening Herald* [EH], 30 October 1915, 4.

⁹²*NQ* 15, December 1915, 2.

⁹³*ET*, 29 September 1914, 5.

⁹⁴"A Gas Helmet," *United Empire* 7 (1916), 534.

⁹⁵*DN* 15 August 1914, 6.

⁹⁶PANL, MG 632, File 1, Minutes of Patriotic Association, 20 August 1914.

⁹⁷*DN*, 21 August 1914, 4.

⁹⁸*DN*, 26 November 1914, 1.

⁹⁹*ET*, 1 December 1914, 6.

¹⁰⁰"Volunteer Force Act," *Statutes of Newfoundland 1914 (War Session)*, 5 Geo. V, Cap. 4; Cramm, *First Five Hundred*, 21-23.

¹⁰¹"War Measures Act, 1914," *Statutes of Newfoundland 1914 (War Session)*, 5 Geo. V, Cap. 1.

¹⁰²"Volunteer Force Loan Act," *Statutes of Newfoundland 1914 (War Session)*, 5 Geo. V, Cap. 8.

¹⁰³George Hicks, *Newfoundland: From Shadow to Sunlight* (St. John's: n.p., 1969), 82.

¹⁰⁴*DN*, 12 August 1914, 6. Not all military planners were convinced that the war would be a short one. Some, notably Lord Kitchener, the British Secretary of State for War, anticipated a conflict that would last three years or more. George H. Cassar, *Kitchener's War: British Strategy from 1914 to 1916* (Washington: Brassey's, 2004), 31-33. See also David French, *British Strategy and War Aims, 1914-1916* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 24-26.

¹⁰⁵PANL, GN 1/3/A, Despatch 1915/38, Report of Patriotic Association, 31 March 1915.

¹⁰⁶PANL, MG 632, File 1, Minutes of Patriotic Association, 11 September 1914.

¹⁰⁷PANL, MG 632, File 1, Minutes of Patriotic Association, 28 September 1914; File 4, Minutes of Musketry Committee, 28 August 1914; File 21, Birmingham Small Arms to Davidson, 22 August 1914.

¹⁰⁸PANL, MG 632, File 4, Minutes of Musketry Committee, 28 August 1914; O'Brien, "Patriotic Association," 74.

¹⁰⁹PANL, MG 632, File 1, Minutes of Patriotic Association, 28 September 1914; File 4, Rennie to Davidson, 28 September 1914.

¹¹⁰PANL, GN 9/1 (Executive Council), Vol. 24, Executive Council Minute, 12 June 1915; PANL MG 632, File 1, Minutes of Patriotic Association, 5 August 1915.

¹¹¹PANL, MG 632, File 21, Reid to Morris, 28 January 1915.

¹¹²MA, 4 January 1916, 4.

¹¹³Cadet 4.2, March 1915, 19.

¹¹⁴PANL, MG 632, File 1, Minutes of Patriotic Association, 5 August 1915; File 4, Davidson to Harcourt, 16 August 1915; *NQ* 17.1 (July 1917), 4.

¹¹⁵Canada, 13 November 1915, 202.

¹¹⁶PANL, MG 632, File 1, Minutes of Patriotic Association, 11 September 1914.

¹¹⁷Nicholson, *Fighting Newfoundlander*, 110.

¹¹⁸PANL, MG 632, File 21, Birmingham Small Arms to Davidson, 22 August 1914; Nicholson, *Fighting Newfoundlander*, 114.

¹¹⁹Cited in O'Brien, "Patriotic Association," 74.

¹²⁰Canada, 22 December 1917, 343.

¹²¹DN, 19 December 1914, 4.

¹²²Nicholson, *Fighting Newfoundlander*, 107.

¹²³O'Brien, "Patriotic Association," 63.

¹²⁴PANL, GN 2/14, Box 9/12, Bennett to Smith, 29 August 1914; *DN* 28 August 1914, 4.

¹²⁵Canada, 6 March 1915, 276.

¹²⁶PANL, MG 632, File 1, Minutes of Patriotic Association, 11 September 1914.

¹²⁷ET, 2 September 1914, 5.

¹²⁸ET, 29 September 1914, 5.

¹²⁹PANL, GN 2/14, Box 9/11, Bennett to Woods, 9 September 1914.

¹³⁰PANL, MG 632, File 1, Minutes of Patriotic Association, 28 September 1914.

¹³¹DN, 28 August 1914, 4.

¹³²PANL, MG 632, File 1, Minutes of Patriotic Association, 11 September 1914.

¹³³CO 194/288, Davidson to Harcourt, 7 December 1914.

¹³⁴Gerhard P. Bassler, "The Enemy Alien Experience in Newfoundland, 1914-1918," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 20.3 (1988), 47-48.

¹³⁵PANL, MG 632, File 4, Rennie to Davidson, 10 September 1914.

¹³⁶ET, 8 September 1914, 5.

¹³⁷DN, 19 September 1914, 4.

¹³⁸DN, 9 September 1914, 3.

¹³⁹DN, 7 December 1914, 1.

¹⁴⁰DN, 30 December 1914, 1.

¹⁴¹PANL, MG 632, File 1, Davidson to Harcourt, 20 August 1914.

¹⁴²PANL, MG 632, File 1, Minutes of Patriotic Association, 11 September 1914.

¹⁴³PANL, MG 632, File 22, Alexander to Davidson, 14 October 1914. The Sergeant Major was a former private in the British Army. O'Brien, "Patriotic Association," 72.

¹⁴⁴GN 1/3/A, 1914, Despatch 171, Davidson to Harcourt, 19 September 1914.

¹⁴⁵DN, 19 September 1914, 4; PANL MG 632, File 1, Minutes of Patriotic Association, 28 September 1914.

¹⁴⁶GN 1/3/A, Despatch 1914/171, Davidson to Harcourt, 19 September 1914.

¹⁴⁷GN 1/3/A, Despatch 1914/171, Harcourt to Davidson, 23 September 1914; Harvey to Davidson, 1 October 1914.

¹⁴⁸GN 1/3/A, Despatch 1914/171, Davidson to Harvey, 31 October 1914.

¹⁴⁹PANL, MG 632, File 22, Alexander to Davidson, 14 October 1914; O'Brien, "Patriotic Association," 79-80.

¹⁵⁰DN, 7 October 1914, 4.

¹⁵¹CO 194/288, Davidson to Harcourt, 31 October 1914.

¹⁵²PANL, MG 632, File 25, Davidson to Mews, 2 October 1914.

¹⁵³Nicholson, *Fighting Newfoundlander*, 114.

¹⁵⁴DN, 5 October 1914, 4.

¹⁵⁵DN, 5 October 1914, 4.

¹⁵⁶Tait, *Newfoundland*, 193.

¹⁵⁷PANL, MG 632, File 4, Rennie to Davidson, 23 October 1914.

¹⁵⁸DN, 6 October 1914, 3.

¹⁵⁹PANL, MG 632, File 22, Alexander to Davidson, 14 October 1914.

¹⁶⁰Selwyn-Brown, "Newfoundland and the War," 1.

¹⁶¹Tait, *Newfoundland*, 194.

¹⁶²Department of External Affairs (Canada), *Documents on Canadian External Affairs* [DCER], Vol. 1, 440-442.

¹⁶³Nicholson, *Fighting Newfoundlander*, 121-122.

¹⁶⁴Tait, *Newfoundland*, 194.

¹⁶⁵Selwyn-Brown, "Newfoundland and the War," 2.

¹⁶⁶*Canada*, 22 December 1917, 343.

¹⁶⁷Gallishaw, *Trenching*, 7.

¹⁶⁸*Canada*, 6 March 1915, 276.

¹⁶⁹Selwyn-Brown, "Newfoundland and the War," 2.

¹⁷⁰DN, 4 January 1915, 3; 12 January 1915, 5.

¹⁷¹DN, 15 January 1914, 6.

¹⁷²DN, 2 February 1915, 4.

¹⁷³"Volunteer Force Act," *Statutes of Newfoundland 1914 (War Session)*, 5 Geo. V, Cap. 4.

¹⁷⁴PANL, GN 2/14, Box 13/4, Davidson to Bennett, 29 July 1915.

¹⁷⁵PANL, MG 632, File 5, Davidson to Timewell, 11 April 1916.

¹⁷⁶DN, 30 January 1915, 5.

¹⁷⁷Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House, 1993), 45.

¹⁷⁸PANL, MG 632, File 5, Minutes of Reserve Force Committee, 16 September 1915.

¹⁷⁹EH, 30 October 1915, 4.

¹⁸⁰MA, 25 October 1915, 4; MA, 8 November 1915, 4. Prohibition was adopted in 1917, following a plebescite on the issue. *CAR*, 1917, 188-189.

¹⁸¹PANL, MG 632, File 5, Montgomerie to Davidson, 24 November 1915.

¹⁸²PANL, GN 1/3/A, Despatch 1916/38, McDermott to Davidson, 21 June 1916; Ashley to Davidson, 4 July 1916.

¹⁸³DN, 7 November 1914, DN, 9 November 1914.

¹⁸⁴MA, 30 November 1915; 1 December 1915; PANL GN 1/10/2, Davidson to Drew, 3 December 1915.

¹⁸⁵PANL, GN 2/14, Box 1/8, Davidson to Bennett, 22 December 1915. This allegation was, in fact, incorrect. Censorship was tightened to prevent publication of any details of the planned withdrawal from Suvla Bay.

¹⁸⁶PANL, MG 632, File 2, Minutes of Standing Committee, 26 June 1916.

¹⁸⁷PANL, GN 2/14, Box 9/9: Bennett to Davidson, 6 June 1916.

¹⁸⁸Parsons, "Morale and Cohesion," 100-105.

¹⁸⁹*Canada*, 20 March 1915, 326.

¹⁹⁰Gallishaw, *Trenching*, 6.

¹⁹¹*Canada*, 20 February 1915, 216.

¹⁹²"Newfoundland's Contingent," *United Empire* 7.4 (1916), 277.

¹⁹³Martin Middlebrook, *The First Day on the Somme: 1 July 1916* (London: Penguin 1971), 26-27, 37.

¹⁹⁴On Newfoundlanders in the Gallipoli Campaign, see Lackenbauer, "War, Memory and the Newfoundland Regiment," 176-214.

¹⁹⁵Nicholson's *Fighting Newfoundlander*, despite the passage of four decades since its original publication, is still the definitive account of the Regiment's time in action. See also Stair Gillon, *The Story of the 29th Division* (London: Nelson, 1925).

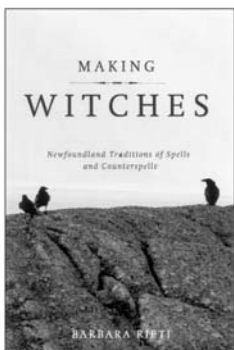
¹⁹⁶Cited in Tait, *Newfoundland*, 199.

¹⁹⁷Noel, *Politics*, 124-125.

¹⁹⁸Jason Churchill, "Of Fighting Baymen and Townies: Towards a Reassessment of the Newfoundland Conscription Crisis, 1917-1918," *Canadian Military History since the 17th Century*, ed. Yves Tremblay (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2000), 167-175.

¹⁹⁹McGrath and Lucas, "Newfoundland," 304-305.

²⁰⁰Hicks, *Newfoundland*, 103.



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