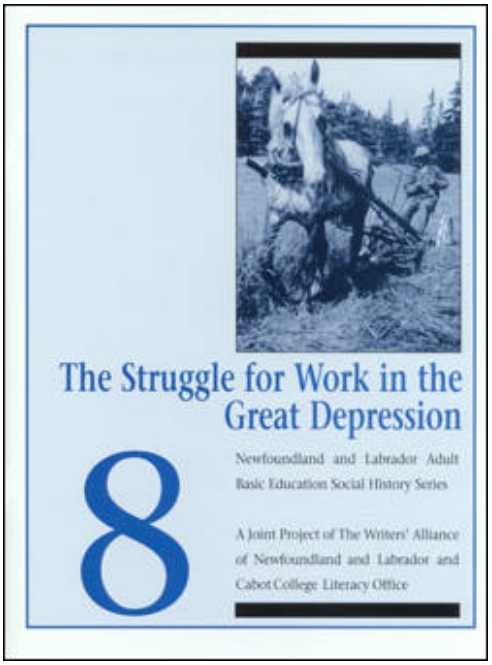

The Struggle for Work in the Great Depression

Newfoundland and Labrador Adult Basic Education Social History Series

A Joint Project of
The Writers' Alliance of
Newfoundland and Labrador
and Cabot College Literacy Office

In This Series...

Book 1 - Timelines of Newfoundland and Labrador
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Book 8: The Struggle for Work in the Great Depression

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Foreword

In 1994, the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador and Cabot College Literacy Office combined to produce a series of Newfoundland books on tape. Under the general title *Increasing Access to Newfoundland Literature*, the tapes and accompanying book *A Woman's Labour*, offered ABE Level 1 students and instructors, as well as the blind and the general public, an accessible and proven set of local literacy materials. The success of that project led to a second collaboration: the *Newfoundland and Labrador Adult Basic Education Social History Series*.

A major difference between the two projects is that while Newfoundland Books on Tape dealt with previously existing material, the essays in the *Social History Series* have been newly created by five professional writers. The prime objective, however, remains the same: to provide adult learners with meaningful literacy materials drawn from their own vibrant culture.

Topics in the series were chosen for their human and social interest and their importance in shaping who we are today. In addition to historical topics, current social and economic issues such as the closure of fish plants are also examined in an attempt to provide a contemporary perspective.

The five writers employed on the project carried out extensive research in public and university archives and libraries. Some also conducted personal interviews. Many of the essays contain new and fascinating historical research. Often the pieces deal with controversial subject matter: the Great Depression, Commission of Government, workfare, the erosion of social programs, poaching and the future of our rural communities. In an effort to dispel the notion that history is "dry and dull," the approach is fresh and provocative. The object is to inform, entertain and, in conjunction with the accompanying notes and questions, to effectively stimulate lively discussion among literacy students. Consequently, this series will also be of interest and practical use to the general public and, especially, to students.

The intended audience for the *Social History Series* is ABE Level 1 students. Because of the disparate subject matter, however, the essays are written in varying degrees of reading difficulty. In particular, students may need help with some of the quoted source material as this sometimes involves archaic syntax and vocabulary.

Acknowledgements

The essays and accompanying notes and questions in the *Newfoundland and Labrador Adult Basic Education Social History Series* were researched and written by Ed Kavanagh, Carmelita McGrath, Janet McNaughton, Kathryn Welbourn and Kathleen Winter. The series was edited by Marian Frances White.

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The coordinator of the project was Ed Kavanagh. Susan Hoddinott, Literacy Specialist at Cabot College, provided overall coordination.

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The *Newfoundland and Labrador Adult Basic Education Social History Series* is a joint project of the Cabot College Literacy Office and the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador.

"Those Eighty-Eight Unfortunates"

Logging in Newfoundland in the 1930s

Ed Kavanagh

Credit: PANL B15-147.

Logging crew, *circa* 1890.

Introduction

In July 1934, 70 men were arrested at the Clarenville train station. They were brought to St. John's. The men were marched through the streets to the Court House. *The Observer's Weekly*, a newspaper of the time, described the scene like this:

> The noise of the shuffling feet moving along the smooth surface of Duckworth Street drew the attention of passers-by to a curious sight that aroused sympathy as [70] men, mostly young, some robust and others looking as if they had not had a square meal in months, many of them with their feet shod in uncomfortably long rubber boots, all of them carrying clumsy packs containing their few belongings, tramped towards the Court House with a score of policemen marching at their side. Gladly they accepted the hot milk provided for them on their arrival at their destination.[1]

They were joined at the Court House by another 18 men who had been arrested in Paquet. The Central District Court found the 88 men guilty of the crimes with which they had been charged. They were sentenced to pay a fine or serve thirty days in jail. None of the men had any money. Once again they were marched through the streets, this time to the penitentiary by Quidi Vidi Lake.

Conditions in the penitentiary were bad. There was not enough room for so many new prisoners. Some of the 88 men had to live in tents on the grounds. Then they were put to work on a penitentiary sewer project. Although the work was hard, they got very little food and it was not good. The men were fed the "prisoner's diet": hard bread (called "hard tack") and cold water. Only four other times in their twelve days of work and imprisonment were they given anything else to eat. Twice they had beans, once some pea soup, and once they were treated to a ration of mutton. As the reporter for the *The Observer's Weekly* noticed, many of these men were weak and sick even before their arrest. They came to St. John's hungry and tired. The conditions in the penitentiary made things even worse.

The newspaper *The Fisherman's Advocate* called the men those "Eighty-Eight Unfortunates." They were loggers. Most of them came from Conception Bay, Trinity Bay and South West Coast ports. They had travelled long distances to work in the logging woods. But life in the camps was bad and the wages were poor. It was impossible to make any money. The men decided to quit.

But they had no money for train or boat fares to get back home. The group of 70 men felt they had no choice. They took the train anyway. They boarded the Express at Grand Falls, Bishop's Falls or Badger. But when they reached Clarenville twenty policemen sent from St. John's were there to meet them. The loggers were quickly arrested.

Eighteen men from a camp near Paquet also decided to quit. Here is how one of the loggers described what happened:

> We had very little food. We started to walk to Paquet. In a straight line that would be about six miles. The route we had to take over rough country and through the woods gave us about ten miles walk. When we reached Paquet we were exhausted. Some of the weaker hands would not be able to go much further. We had all our grub pretty well used when we got there. The *Prospero*

[1] *Observer's Weekly*, July 21, 1934, p

was due and soon after we saw her approach. When she docked we went to get aboard and the Captain said we were not to come aboard unless we had money to pay our passage. We told him we had none, and had no food. He replied that we were not to come aboard unless we were prepared to pay. One of our gang said: "What must we do, stay here and perish?" He replied: "Yes, stay and perish." We discussed the matter. We had no one to apply to. No one at Paquet would interest themselves in us. We were without shelter or food. We had no money. We had no one at home or in St. John's to telegraph to even if we could do so, which we could not, unless we could prepay the tolls. We were faced with starvation if we remained, and with violating the law if we boarded the ship. We decided to board her and take the consequences.[2]

The consequence was a thirty day prison sentence. After they served twelve days of the thirty, the governor of Newfoundland pardoned the men. Once the men were released from prison, the government was forced to send them home—free of charge!

Credit: PANL A41-104.

Loggers on the Exploits River, *circa* 1900.

The government called these men criminals. The pulp and paper companies they had worked for called them "deserters." The 88 men knew they had broken the law. They argued that they had no choice. They did not think they had done anything really wrong. They did not understand why they were treated so badly. The oldest man, who was also the men's leader, was Captain William Courage from Garnish, Fortune Bay. He was 60 years old, and a respected fishing captain well known in Newfoundland. Captain Courage and the other men did not think of themselves as criminals. They thought they had good reasons for leaving the logging camps. Many Newfoundlanders agreed with them.

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[2] *Fisherman's Advocate*, August 3rd, 1936. p.6.

What led to this sad situation? Why were ordinary men forced to break the law? Why were conditions and wages so bad for the loggers? The answers aren't simple. Politics, greed, cover-ups, the Great Depression and the way workers were treated in the 1930s all played a part.

Commission of Government and the Great Depression

In 1934, most of the world was suffering through one of the worst economic periods in history: the Depression. The Depression began in 1929 when the Stock Market crashed. It continued until the beginning of the Second World War. During the Depression unemployment was very high. Jobs, money and food were scarce.

Newfoundland's economy in 1934 was based on the sale of raw materials like fish, minerals and wood to other countries. It still is today. During the Depression prices for these things fell to all-time lows. To make matters worse, there were some years in the 1930s when the fishery failed altogether. Newfoundlanders had always known hard times, but the Depression was like nothing they had ever seen.

The Depression made things bad for people throughout the world. But Newfoundland had especially hard times. In 1934 Newfoundland was an independent country. As an island it was also isolated. Newfoundland had close ties with Britain, but Britain was very far away. Britain did not want to bother with Newfoundland's problems.

During the Depression many people lived on welfare, called the "dole." This was never very much money. In Newfoundland in the 1930s the dole was only 6 cents a day per person. As the Depression deepened and the economy grew worse the government cut welfare benefits even further. Taxes were also increased. Many dole officers were very strict. They wanted to know exactly how much food and money people had before they would give them their "dole order." A Newfoundland folk song called "The Dole Song" describes what people thought of the dole:

> You asked me to sing you a song; I'll do the best I can,
> For when a man goes on the dole his troubles are just begun.
> It is the case of any man in every port around;
> You first give in your statement, and then they'll write it down.
> First they'll ask you what's your name, and then ask what you've got;
> A few old raggedy lines of gear and a few old lobster pots.
> To see what trouble a man has got and he has to tell them so;
> Be careful boys, don't tell no lies when you goes on the dole.[3]

People hated the "soul-rotting" dole as *The Fisherman's Advocate* called it. But many people had little choice. There was just no work. It was either take the dole or go hungry. Even with the dole many people could not get enough food and clothing. Old people and children suffered greatly. Many people died from disease and lack of good food. The situation looked bleak.

By 1934 the economy was so bad that Newfoundland did something few countries have ever done. Since 1855 Newfoundland had ruled herself through elected representatives.

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[3] "The Dole Song" from *Come and I will Sing You* edited by Genevieve Lehr, 1985. Song collected from Jack Lushman, Sr. Ramea, 1977.

Now, facing bankruptcy, Newfoundland gave up the right to an elected government. It turned to Britain for help. Britain decided that Newfoundland should be run by "Commission of Government." This meant that Newfoundland would now be ruled by a governor and six commissioners—three from Newfoundland and three from the United Kingdom. All the commissioners were appointed by Britain. This system was to remain in place until Newfoundland's financial situation improved. Commission of Government lasted until Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949.

The Logging Industry in the 1930s

Background

Ever since Newfoundland was first discovered, the economy was mainly based on fishing. When the fishery failed, all Newfoundlanders were hurt. In the late 1800s Newfoundland's leaders wanted to see new kinds of work in Newfoundland. Most of the island was covered with thick forests. Maybe it would be a good idea to bring outside businesses into the country to start logging. The government decided to make it easy for these foreign companies to move in and cut Newfoundland's forests. Even today governments often do the same thing. Companies are sometimes given "tax breaks." This means that they do not have to pay taxes for a number of years. Governments hope that this will create jobs.

By the 1930s there were two big pulp and paper companies operating in Newfoundland: the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company (usually called the A.N.D. Co.), and the International Power and Paper Company (usually called the I.P.P. Co.). The A.N.D. Co. was based in Grand Falls; the I.P.P. Co. was based in Corner Brook and also had a power plant in Deer Lake. Neither of these companies were owned by Newfoundlanders. The A.N.D. Co. was owned by people in Britain, the I.P.P. Co. was owned by people in New York. Both companies were given a very good deal by the Newfoundland government. They paid no taxes. They could cut as many trees as they wanted, almost anywhere. Sometimes as many as 9000 loggers worked for these companies.

Most of the wood cut in Newfoundland in the 1930s was spruce and fir. The same is true today. The wood was used to make pulp for paper making, especially newsprint. In fact, the A.N.D. Co. was started by the Harmsworth family of Britain who also owned the *Daily Mail*, one of Britain's biggest newspapers.[4]

Operations

How the System Worked

Both the A.N.D. Co. and the I.P.P. Co. used contractors to run their logging camps. This meant the companies did not deal with their woods workers directly. The contractors hired the loggers and set up the logging camps. The contractors made sure the cut wood was delivered to the mill. It was also the contractors' job to look after the men.

Each season the companies gave the contractors a set sum of money to run the camps. The contractors had to pay all the costs of the logging operations with this money. It is important to note that the contractors' own wages also came out of this money. The

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[4] Dufferin Sutherland. "The Men Went to Work by the Stars and Returned by Them": The Experience of Work in the Newfoundland Woods during the 1930s. *Newfoundland Studies* 7,2 (1991). p. 144.

contractors also had to buy all of their supplies from the company stores. Food, saw blades, medicine--everything came from the companies at company-set prices. It is easy to see that the contractors would want to run the logging operations as cheaply as possible if they wanted to make a profit. This system very often led to poor working conditions for the loggers.

The Woods Workers

Newfoundlanders who worked in the woods did many different jobs. The "Cutters" cut the wood and piled it into "cords." Experienced cutters with a good stand of timber could cut about 1.25 cords in a 10 hour day. After the pulpwood was cut and piled near the road by the cutter, "Teamsters" hauled the wood by horse drawn sled to the bank of a stream or pond. The "Loaders" helped the teamster pile the wood on the sled. In the spring the "Drivers" directed the wood down the river or stream and cleared any "log jams"—places where the stream became blocked. There were also cooks who prepared food for the men. "Cookees" helped the cooks.

Sometimes the cutters had to walk an hour or more to get to the area they had been given to cut. This area was called a "chance." The loggers called it this because they never knew how much good wood would be on it. There was a chance that they would make money. There was an equal chance that they would make little or nothing.

All of these jobs were long and hard. The work day began before the sun rose and only ended when the sun went down. In the 1930s there were no chain saws or ATVs. Cooks had no refrigerators. Cutters used handsaws or bucksaws. Teamsters used one or two horses and sleds to get the wood over snow and ice to the water. The work was backbreaking. In the summer the men had to put up with heat and flies. In the winter there was deep snow and biting cold. The drivers often spent all of their work day soaking wet. Their work was also dangerous. There is a Newfoundland folk song about the work of a driver. The song is called "The River Driver's Lament." Here are two stanzas from the song:

> was just the age of sixteen when I first went on the drive,
> And after six months' hard labour at home I did arrive,
> I courted with a pretty girl, 'twas her caused me to roam,
> Sure I'm a river driver and I'm far away from home.
> I'll eat when I am hungry and I'll drink when I am dry,
> Get drunk when I am ready, get sober bye and bye,
> And if this river don't drown me it's down I mean to roam,
> Sure I'm a river driver and I'm far away from home.[5]

This song shows that the woods workers were often quite young. The person in this song is only sixteen.

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[5] Kenneth Peacock, *Songs of the Newfoundland Outports*, PEA 132 No. 913. Collected from John T. O'Quinn, Shearstown, July, 1959.

Credit: PANL NA 2362.
Hewlitt's Camp, *circa* 1930s.

The camps where the men stayed during the cutting and driving seasons were very uncomfortable. There were usually two buildings: a cook-house and a bunk-house. Sometimes there was a smaller building called the "van" where the men bought small personal supplies. All of the buildings were usually made from logs and sticks. The bunks were small and built along the sides of the bunkhouse. If a man wanted a mattress he was charged 25 cents a month for it. The bunkhouses were often overcrowded and dirty. There were hardly any good washing or toilet facilities. At night the only light came from smoky oil lamps. In the wintertime the camps were freezing cold. The loggers preferred to sleep two to a bunk for extra warmth. The dirt and the difficulty of washing clothes made the camps a breeding ground for lice. Here is how one logger described it:

> Lousy? Yes, everything you could mention. Anything that would crawl you'd get in the woods. There was no getting rid of them. Lots of fellows would wash their things...and by Saturday night you'd be lousy again. When you would leave to go home you would go into the van and get a clean suit of underwear and throw out your old stuff. By the time you got home all your clothes would be lousy again; everything even your socks....Mom would take our things and put them in Jeyes fluid and then you would have a good wash, comb your head and use stuff in it. Perhaps you'd still be lousy when you went back in the woods again to work.[6]

Because of this many men slept on freshly cut boughs instead of the mattresses. But the boughs quickly dried out and became uncomfortable.

There was usually plenty of food in the camps but it was mostly the same. The loggers' diet was made up mainly of beans, bread, tea, salt fish, rolled oats, fatback pork, potatoes and turnips. The most common food by far was beans. This song describes how the men felt about so many beans:

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[6] Trevor Sparkes, "Experiences of Woodsmen in the Rocky Harbour and Deer Lake Areas" (unpublished paper, 1979, ms. 79-388, MUNFLA).

It was nice to find a camp with good wood,
And also the cook if he cooked up good food.
In this we were lucky, our cook did his best,
For beans was the main thing, we could manage the rest.
And it was hard, hard times.
We would have them for breakfast, in the lunch boxes too,
And also for supper you might get a few.
But the beans they were thousands, they were there by galore,
Even the bucksaw would sing, "Come on with some more."[7]

"Those Eighty-Eight Unfortunates"

Like Captain William Courage, most of the men who were arrested in July 1934 and marched through the streets of St. John's were fishermen by trade. But the fishery had failed and prices for fish were low. The men needed to make money to support their families. The government's policy in the 1930s was "no dole for no work." The only jobs were in the woods. Fishermen were used to hard work and trying conditions. When they heard that the pulp and paper companies needed woods workers, they signed on. But once they were in the woods they realized that it was impossible to make money. Even though they had full-time jobs their wages were very low. This was true even by the standards of the 1930s.

The men were not paid a flat wage by the hour, day or week. They were paid by how much wood they cut. The price paid could be anywhere between a $1.30 and $1.43 for a cord of unpeeled wood. Peeling the wood meant stripping off the bark. Extra money was paid for a cord of peeled wood. It would usually take a man a ten hour day to cut 1.25 cords of unpeeled wood. But sometimes the area or "chance" a man was given to cut had many thin or stunted trees. Sometimes the wood was difficult to get at. Men who did not have much experience in the woods found it slow going.

The "Scaler" determined how much a man was paid for the wood he cut. He was an employee of the company. The scaler measured the men's piled wood to see how many cords they had. They took note of the amount of poor wood and even the air spaces between the logs. The loggers never knew what to expect when their wood was scaled. Many men felt that the scalers did not give them a fair deal. The loggers thought that because the scalers were company men, they would always favour the company.

In addition, a great many expenses were taken out of the loggers' paychecks. Here is how a logger's finances worked out at a $1.34 a cord. If he cut 1.25 cords a day for 26 working days a month, a logger made $43.55. But there were many deductions taken from this money:

30 days board at 60¢ a day	$18.00
Doctor's fee	.40
1 saw blade	.90
Necessary wear and tear on clothing which must be replaced	$4.00
Total deductions	$23.50
Money due the logger	$20.25[8]

[7] John Ashton, *The Lumbercamp Song Tradition*, p.196. (Quoted in Sutherland), p. 160.
[8] "The Bradley Report on Logging Operations in Newfoundland 1934". p. 208.

Credit: PANL NA 2360.
Loggers peeling wood.

After a whole month, working ten hours a day, the logger made only $20.25. But there were often even more deductions. If the weather was bad or a man was sick and could not work, he was not paid. There were also the logger's personal expenses called his "van": files for his saw, extra saw blades, tobacco, use of a mattress, clothes, stamps and medicine. The logger also had to pay to get to the woods camp from his home. Sometimes this cost as much as $20.00. It is also important to note that the amount of wood a man cut in a day depended on where he worked. Some stands of timber had more wood than others. Often the new men were given a "clean-up chance." This is an area that has already been cut by other loggers. It was very hard to cut 1.25 cords of wood when working a clean-up chance. Many of the 88 arrested men were given clean-up chances when they first came to the camps. Here is how one of the 88 men described the work:

> Four days after we landed...we were sent about two miles from the camp and told to start there. Where we landed to cut wood was at the foot of a range of high land up which we had to climb. When we got to the top we found that there was very little wood on it. The whole place had been cut over before. What was left standing consisted of large, black spruce trees with heavy limbs almost from stump to top. Nearly every second tree cut was useless because of dry rot in the heart....We tackled them and did our very best....The trees were so scarce that if we felled a thirty or forty foot tree it would not strike another in falling.[9]

New men often did not know enough about the work to cut 1.25 cords of wood in a day even in a good chance. It took a lot of time to learn how to cut a stand of timber and use a bucksaw properly.

For all these reasons the loggers could not put any money aside. There seemed to be little point in working. This was even more true if the man had a wife and children to

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[9] *The Fisherman's Advocate*, August 3rd, 1934, p.6.

support. Family men thought they would be more useful at home. The work was also hard on their health. It was under these conditions that Captain William Courage and his fellow workers—the "Eighty-Eight Unfortunates"—decided to quit.

F. Gordon Bradley and the Great Cover-Up

Because life was so difficult for the loggers, "desertions" from the camps increased. Newfoundlanders had been taught that hard work would be rewarded. But in the lumber woods days of backbreaking labour added up to little or nothing. Finally, the situation led to a public outcry.

When Commission of Government took office in 1934 they decided to set up an inquiry into the logging business. They appointed F. Gordon Bradley to undertake this work. Bradley was a respected Newfoundlander. He had been the Leader of the Opposition in Newfoundland's last parliament before the Commission took over.

Bradley travelled all over Newfoundland. He visited many logging camps and talked to hundreds of woods workers. Some of the men were afraid to talk to Bradley. They would only come to see him at night or in secret. Even though conditions were bad, they were afraid they would never get a job again if the companies found out.

Bradley also talked with 10 of the 88 men who had been arrested. Here is what he said about them in his report:

> Nine of the ten had never handled a bucksaw before; they were fishermen....The men believed they were to be paid $1.30 per day and board found. Some of these men walked fifty miles to secure a job at which they might earn a living....They were seperated in different camps. Some had fairly good timber to cut; others, from their description of it, were in scrub spruce, and clean-up chances. Several of them worked long hours and at least one Sunday. Their time varied from three to over twenty days. They could take nothing. I should have been surprised if they could [when they were paid] $1.30 to $1.43 a cord. It was an absurdity to take these men at such prices and the Company must bear responsibility for the blundering of its agent. The final result was that these men were marched through the streets as ordinary criminals, convicted, and sentenced to imprisonment, for acts arising out of a desperate plight brought upon them by the blundering of others.[10]

After many months of work Bradley wrote a very good report full of details about the logging business. He told the commissioners about the many things that made life so hard for the loggers. Most importantly, he said that all of the woods workers were badly underpaid. He said that wages should be raised. He described how the companies protected their interests at the expense of the workers. The companies set the prices and determined how much money was given to the contractors. The companies made the contractors buy all their supplies from the company stores. The companies also got to change the amount of wood they might require in any given year. Here is how Bradley described this system in his report:

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[10] "The Bradley Report on Logging Operations in Newfoundland 1934". p. 208.

> From the Company's standpoint this system is an excellent one. It gives them complete control over all operations and costs without immediate responsibility. It enables them to dictate the prices of wood to the cutter, and of wages, meals, and supplies of all kinds. The daily procedure in all operations is in their hands. There is...ample opportunity to cut costs in all directions to a minimum. [11]

Bradley talked about how the hard work affected the men's health. Many men were badly hurt working in the woods. They needed money so much that they often worked themselves too hard. Some of these men were never able to work again.

Bradley compared the loggers with the men who worked in the mills where the newsprint was produced. Those men made 30 cents an hour. They worked an eight hour day. Their daily wage came to $2.40. For 26 days they made $62.40. A logger made only $20.25 in 26 days. It is true that the mill workers had to pay for their own food and housing, but there is still a big difference. Bradley worked out that the loggers were making only making 11 cents an hour. And, of course, in many ways the loggers had a much more difficult job.

Bradley asked the government to make many changes. He said that the woods camps should have standards. Regular government inspections should help to make sure that living conditions were better. He said that scalers should be trained so they would be more fair. Bradley also said that an average workman needed at least fifty dollars a month to support himself and his family. Clearly, earning fifty dollars a month in the logging woods of the 1930s was next to impossible.

When the Commission of Government received Bradley's report they were not impressed. Sir John Hope Simpson, one of the British appointed commissioners, was the commissioner for natural resources. He convinced his fellow commissioners that the report should not be made public. He was afraid that there would be widespread strikes and riots if the public knew all the details. In particular, he did not believe, as Bradley did, that the workers should have at least fifty dollars a month. Here is what Hope Simpson wrote to his bosses in Britain:

> Mr. Bradley [argues for] a standard of living far higher than the standard normally enjoyed by any outport workman. He considers that the net income should be sufficient to house, clothe, and feed the family, educate the children, pay the doctor and clergyman, and provide the man with at least a few simple luxuries.... It is reasonable to point out that a standard such as that contemplated by Mr. Bradley, on which he bases his recommendations with regard to earnings, is far above anything which the fisherman demands or expects, and is indeed far above anything at all usual among labouring men of this country. [12]

From this it appears that Hope Simpson did not believe that Newfoundland workers should have even a comfortable standard of living. Perhaps he thought that Newfoundlanders liked being poor.

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[11] "The Bradley Report on Logging Operations in Newfoundland 1934". p. 208.

[12] Draft despatch from Commission of Government to Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, 2-3, s2-1-1 file 3, PANL. (Quoted in Sutherland).

Credit: PANL B15-113
Mill at Bonne Bay.

Hope Simpson was afraid that the Bradley report would make the government look bad.[13] He decided not to make the report public. But he did show it to the companies. He struck a deal with them. He said that if they raised the men's wages to at least $25 a month he would not publish the Bradley report. The companies agreed. They also agreed to make some small changes in the men's living conditions. On January 1st, 1935 the men's wages were raised to $25 a month. This was still only half of what Bradley had said was necessary for a man to support his wife and family with dignity.

The A.N.D. Co. and the I.P.P. Co. had always said that they could not afford to pay the men any more money. They said that the Depression was making things difficult for them. They argued that prices and demand for newsprint were low. But Gordon Bradley pointed out in his report that the A.N.D Co. had a contract with The Associated Newspapers Limited to supply them with all their newsprint for a period of twenty-five years. This contract alone would use up all the pulpwood the company could produce.[14]

But perhaps the most interesting fact is this: In 1933, while their loggers made 11 cents an hour, the A.N.D. Co. made a net profit of $1,075,521.21.

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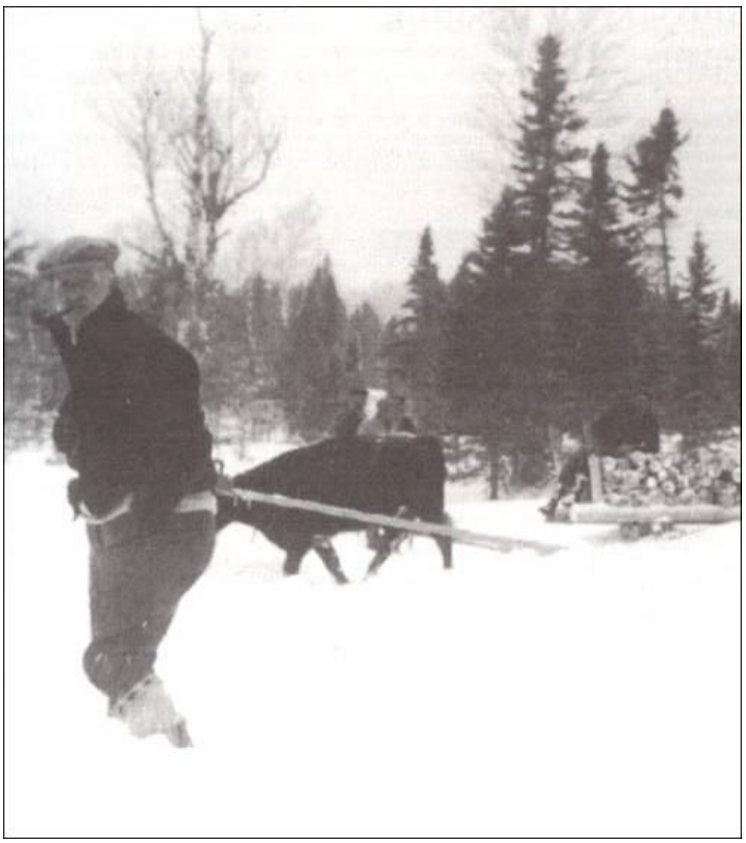
[13] Dufferin Sutherland, p.163
[14] Bradley, p.210.

Conclusion

It was a long time before conditions and wages improved in the logging woods. In the 1930s the loggers found it difficult to organize because they were spread out all over the province. When they had strikes they usually failed. Sometimes workers in one part of the island would not even know that their fellow workers had gone on strike somewhere else. Commission of Government also made it difficult to have much public debate about logging issues. People had no elected politicians to turn to. And St. John's was very far away from the logging woods.[15]

In 1959, there was the biggest and longest logging strike of them all. The International Woodworkers of America (IWA) came to Newfoundland to organize the loggers. The premier at the time, Joey Smallwood, did not want them in Newfoundland. The strike was very emotional and often violent. A policeman was killed. In the end, the loggers and the IWA lost.

In the 1960s more logging unions were formed. Little by little conditions improved. Now loggers in Newfoundland are treated much better. Most of them can even afford a "few simple luxuries." And, in the end, that isn't too much to ask.



Credit: PANL 2361.
Using an Ox to haul wood, Roberts Arm.

[15] Sutherland, p.166.

Glossary of Logging Terms

Chance: The area which a cutter is given to work.

Clean-up chance: An area to be cut which has been cut over at least once before.

Cookee: The cook's helper.

Contractor: The link between the companies and the workforce. They hired the men and took care of the day-to-day work in the woods.

Cutter: The main link in the logging industry, the person who cuts the trees.

Driver: The man who directs the cut wood down the river or stream to the mill.

Haul-off: Time in winter when the teamsters bring the cut wood to the streams and rivers.

Loader: He helps the teamster load his sled.

Scaler: The employee of the company who determines how much wood a cutter should be paid for.

Teamster: The man who brings the cut wood to the bank of the river or stream with horses and sled.

Van: A man's personal supplies in the logging camps: tobacco, clothes, stamps etc. Also the building where these things are sold.

Note to Instructors

"'Those Eighty-Eight Unfortunates': Logging in Newfoundland in the 1930s" is appropriate for discussion of various work related topics. Students should be encouraged to compare the working conditions and attitudes towards work of the past, with those of today. Welfare, workfare and the impact of recessions on the social fabric of a community should also be examined. Other related topics are attitudes towards the poor in the past as compared to today, the social responsibilities of big companies and corporations and the role of government during difficult economic times.

This piece should also be used in conjunction with the essays in "Desperate Measures: The Great Depression in Newfoundland and Labrador" (Book 4), and especially with "Pierce Power and the Unemployed Riot of 1935." Commission of Government, and the reasons leading up to it, should also be singled out. Many other essays in this series offer ideas to extend the discussion.

Most Level I students will need help with the source material of this piece as much of the language and syntax is slightly archaic.

Issues for Discussion

1. The treatment of prisoners in the past as compared to today.

2. The treatment of the poor in the past as compared to today. The attitude of the well-off towards the poor. Was it different in the 1930s?

3. The effects of the Great Depression on Newfoundland society.

4. The wisdom of giving up elected government for Commission of Government. The effect this had on society.

5. The morality of stealing rides on boats and trains in the 1930s. Are there ever times when it is permissable to break the law?

6. The psychological and social effects of the dole.

7. The practice of granting tax breaks to companies.

8. The government policy of "no dole for no work." How does this relate to the "workfare" of today?

9. The different situations of the woods and mill workers.

10. Did the suppression of the Bradley Report mean that Commission of Government was morally corrupt?

11. The role of unions in the improvement of conditions for loggers.

12. Sir John Hope Simpson's idea of what was a "reasonable" standard of living for a Newfoundlander. Where did his attitude come from? Was he alone in this thinking?

Questions for Discussion

1. Describe the conditions in the penitentiary for the "Eighty-eight Unfortunates." Would things be different today?

2. What was the "prisoner's diet?"

3. Why did the 88 loggers decide to leave the lumber woods?

4. The captain of the Prospero would not take the 18 loggers on board his ship at Paquet. Why? Put yourself in his place. Was this the right decision? What would have happened if he did take the men on board?

5. Why did Newfoundland give up the right to rule herself? How did Commission of Government work? Would things have been better for the loggers under an elected government?

6. The Great Depression hit Newfoundland particularly badly. Why? How long did the Great Depression last? What finally brought it to an end?

7. Describe how Newfoundlanders regarded the "dole."

8. Why did the Newfoundland government want logging companies to set up in Newfoundland? Was this a good idea? Why do you think the companies were owned by foreigners instead of Newfoundlanders?

9. What is a "tax break?" Is this a good idea?

10. What were the two main kinds of trees cut in Newfoundland to make pulp for paper making?

11. Describe the job of a "contractor." Was this a difficult job? Why did the pulp and paper companies use contractors?

12. Describe the jobs of

    - the cutter
    - the loader
    - the teamster
    - the driver
    - the cook
    - the cookee

13. What is the difference between a chance and a clean-up chance?

14. What were living conditions in the woods like for the loggers? Is the same true today?

15. What was the most common food in the logging camps. Why?

16. What did the "scaler" do? Why didn't the loggers trust the scalers?

17. How was it possible that a logger could work 26 days a month and still make hardly any money? Compare the loggers job to that of the mill worker. Which was better?

18. Why did Sir John Hope Simpson and Commission of Government cover up the Bradley Report? Does the same kind of thing happen today?

19. What do you think of Hope Simpson's idea of a "reasonable" standard of living for the average Newfoundlander? Do you think the government of today feels the same way?

20. Why did it take such a long time for unions to be successful in Newfoundland's logging woods? Why do you think Premier Joey Smallwood did not want the IWA union to set up in Newfoundland?

21. Compare the logging conditions of today with those of the 1930s.

Activities

Visit one of the logging museums in Newfoundland.

The Markland Experiment

by Janet McNaughton

Introduction

In the Depression of the 1930s there was almost no work. People wondered if Newfoundland would ever recover. Some thought that Newfoundlanders should depend less on the fishery. If people could farm, they might be able to support themselves. This was the idea behind the land settlement program.

A number of land settlements were set up in Newfoundland, but this essay is about Markland, the first and biggest land settlement project.

Part One
Leaving for Markland

Early one Sunday morning, on April 30, 1934, ten men stood in the St. John's train station. They were waiting to take the train from St. John's to Whitbourne. They had thin, hungry faces. Their clothes and boots were old and worn out. Their wives and children had come to say goodbye. One of these women carried a toddler in her arms. The little girl was barefoot—her parents could not afford to buy her socks or shoes.

Some other men had come to say goodbye too. They were well-dressed and important looking. They looked too rich to be friends of the ten men who were leaving. But they shook their hands and wished them good luck. Finally, the train was ready. The ten men set out on one of the most unusual trips of their lives.

Who were these ten men? They were all veterans—men who had fought in World War I more than 18 years before. All of them lived in St. John's and they all had families. These men were suffering in the hard years of the Depression. Most were on the dole, but none of them wanted to be. They wanted to work and support their families, just like everyone does. For many years, they had been without hope.

Now, they had new hope. The Commission of Government had agreed to invest two years worth of dole money for each of the ten families in a land settlement program. The ten men were going to start a new community in the woods west of Whitbourne. They were going to make a place called Markland.

Part Two
Land Settlement Begins

William Lidstone was one of these ten men. Land settlement was his idea. Times had been hard in Newfoundland for many years. William Lidstone thought he could get off the dole and support his family if the government would use his dole money to help him set up a farm. He had taken this plan to the government of Newfoundland in 1933. But the government said there was no way of knowing how the money would be spent. The government said no.

By the end of 1933, the Dominion of Newfoundland was bankrupt. It did not have enough money to govern and no one was willing to lend more. So the government shut itself down and asked Britain to take control of Newfoundland. In February of 1934, elected government was replaced by an appointed commission. This was the Commission of

Government. For the next 15 years, there were no elections in Newfoundland. The Commission of Government made all the decisions.

The Commission of Government was run by commissioners who were appointed by the government of Britain. Some of these men were Newfoundlanders and some were sent from Britain. William Lidstone wondered if this new government would listen to his idea to get people off the dole. He went to talk to the Commission of Government. This time, he found people who were interested in his plan. Some of the commissioners knew that there were land settlement projects in Britain, Canada and the USA: These projects were helping people support themselves.

William Lidstone was told to find some men who would be trustees for the project. The trustees would work without pay and make sure that money for the project was spent properly. If William Lidstone could find trustees, the Commission of Government would use some dole money to set up a few farms. William Lidstone went to a young lawyer named Frederick Emerson. Emerson helped Lidstone find four trustees. They were Chesley A. Pippy, Rudolph Cochius, Dr. John Grieve and Sir Marmaduke Winter. Pippy was a young businessman. He owned a company that supplied equipment for road building. Cochius was born in Holland. He was a landscape designer. He had designed Bowering Park. Grieve was a doctor who had spent most of his life in Labrador. Winter was a businessman and retired politician.

Like most people in Newfoundland, these trustees were worried. Too many people had been forced to take dole because there was no work. The dole provided about 27 cents a day for each person.[1] This was not enough money to live on. Many people were starving to death. The trustees hoped that dole money could be used to give people a way to support themselves. The Commission of Government gave the trustees about two years' worth of dole money for ten families. The trustees were to help the ten families set up a farming community, buy supplies, keep track of spending and look after the settlers until they could support themselves.

After the trustees took over the project, we hear nothing more about William Lidstone. His name is never mentioned in any of the reports about Markland. He did not help to make decisions. It seems as if he was treated like all the other men who were chosen for this project.

Part Three
Setting up Markland

In those days, there was no Trans-Canada Highway. Most of the roads ran between outports. The trustees looked for land that could be farmed. They wanted land near the railway so that equipment and supplies could be brought in. They found a place near the Whitbourne railway station, on a road that ran from Whitbourne to Colinet. Almost no one lived on this land. Some rivers ran through it. The rivers could power sawmills.

The project was given about 39 square miles of land along the road between Whitbourne and Colinet. The land was marshy, but it was dotted with islands of higher land that could

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[1] The amount of money that people got on the dole was different from place to place. To understand this, see the essay in this series, "Dole and Desperate Measures," by Carmelita McGrath in book 4 of this series.

be farmed. There were not many rocks in the ground. Parts of the land had been cut over for timber, but it needed to be cleared for farming. The trustees called this place Markland.

At the end of April 1934, the first ten men left St. John's to go to Markland. Thomas Lodge was one of the well-dressed men who came to see them off. He had come from England to Newfoundland to serve as a commissioner in the Commission of Government. Later, when Thomas Lodge wrote a book about Newfoundland, he said that he had been worried when he saw those men. To him, they were:

> ten men who had found the difficulties of life too great for them—under-nourished, ill-clad and with obviously lowered morale due to years of partial or complete unemployment.[2]

Under-nourished means under-fed. Morale is spirit or confidence.

Lodge wished the men luck, but he expected at least half of them to give up and come back to St. John's. He thought they would find the work in Markland too hard.

At first, the men lived in tents. They cleared some land near the road with hand tools-axes, picks and shovels. It was hard work, but in a few weeks, they cleared about half an acre. Then the Fishermen's Protective Union (the FPU) offered to loan them a tractor. It was shipped from Port Union on the railway. The tractor made work easier.

Thomas Lodge was not the only one who had doubts. In a report to the Commission of Government, the four trustees later wrote that most of these men had been living in poverty for more than three years. Before they left to go to Markland, the trustees found:

> that many [of the men] had...no worldly goods of any kind. Others had to be provided with clothing before they could even proceed to Markland to begin work. A large proportion of them had been unable to let their children leave their homes in cold weather, as the children were so scantily clad.[3]

The trustees worried about what they-called the "moral recovery" of these men. They thought that living on the dole might have made them too weak and too dependent on handouts. Maybe these men would not be willing or able to work hard.

Thomas Lodge left Newfoundland for two months after the men went to Markland. When he returned, he went to visit Markland. He later wrote, "when I saw the men again I was profoundly impressed by the moral transformation which had taken place...These ten Newfoundlanders proved themselves ready to work to the limit of their physical powers."[4] All that summer, the men worked from 6:30 in the morning until dark. When enough land was cleared, they began to build houses. Most of the men did not know how to do carpentry. The men who did were put into different groups so that each group had one man who knew what he was doing.

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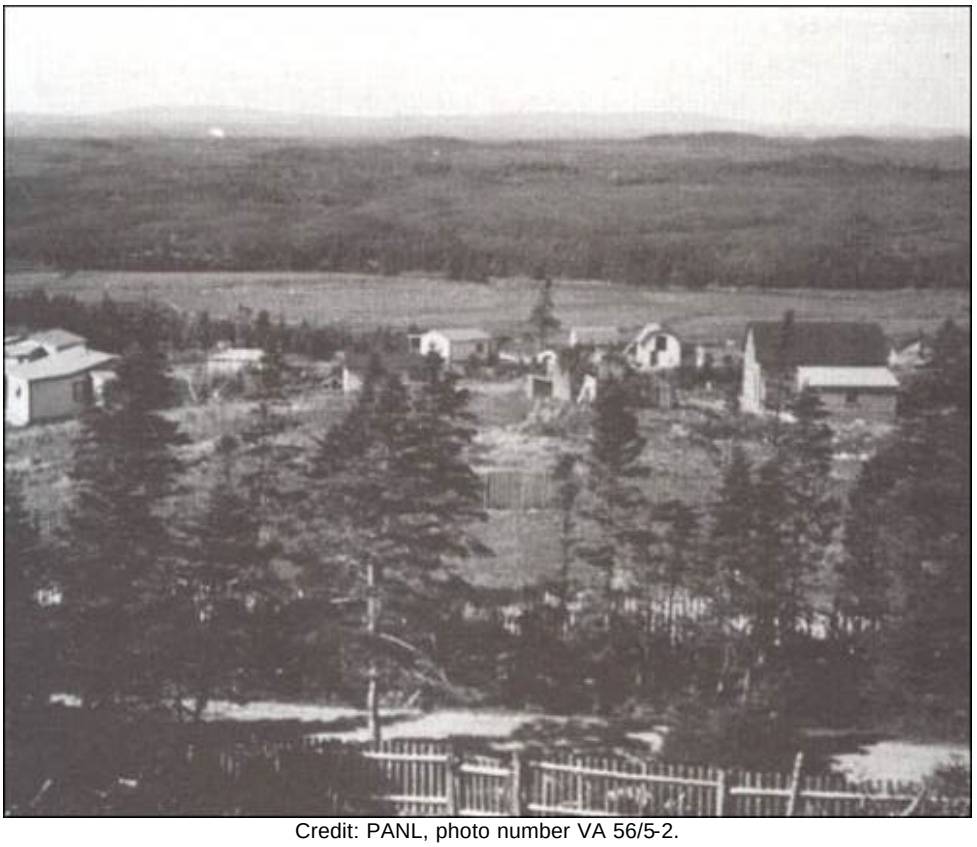
[2] Thomas Lodge, *Dictatorship in Newfoundland*, p. 173.
[3] "Interim Report on Markland, 1934" by the Trustees, December 1934 (signed by Fred Emerson on behalf of the trustees of Markland) p.8. Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
[4] Thomas Lodge, p. 173.



Credit: PANL, photo number VA 56/5-2.

Picture One

Farm Houses, Barns and Sheds at Markland

This is what the farms at Markland looked like by 1939. Behind the farms, you can see some of the fields that the men cleared in the first few years.

Credit: PANL. VA 56/5-6.

Picture Two

Gathering Hay

After the land was cleared, the men at Markland farmed together for many years. These men are gathering hay at Haricot, 12 miles south of Markland.

The settlers in Markland were promised their own plots of land to farm. All the men knew where their own land was, but at first, everyone farmed together. The first crops were planted in community (or communal) plots of land. Potatoes, turnips and cabbages were grown.

Everyone who visited Markland in the first year noticed how hard-working and happy the men were. The trustees talked about the "Markland spirit." They said, "the chance of becoming independent and self-supporting has a strong attraction...the men take a pride in calling themselves 'Marklanders.'"[5] The trustees were no longer worried about the men. They wrote, "by the end of June it was clear that the question of the moral recovery of this class presented no difficulties."

Things went so well that the trustees asked the Commission of Government to make the Markland project bigger. One of the trustees, Rudolph Cochius, was hired as the project manager. He moved to Markland. Ten more men were brought to Markland as well. By October, 1934, 20 families were settled there. Two school teachers were hired and the first school opened near the end of October. The men had worked by lamp light to finish the school on time.

Part Four
The Idea of Land Settlement

As Markland grew, the idea of the project began to change. At first, it was just a way to get a few families off the dole. Now, the trustees began to think that Markland was more important than that. At the end of 1934, they felt land settlements might change Newfoundland completely. They began to see Markland as a "social experiment." They wanted Markland to provide "a social organization of the people, a raising of the deplorably low standard of life, [and] the creation of a community sense." Two of the commissioners, Thomas Lodge and John Hope Simpson, agreed. Early in 1935, these two commissioners began to talk about Markland as an experiment in "social regeneration." (Regeneration means to grow again.)

They wanted to set up settlements like Markland all over the island of Newfoundland. They hoped that hundreds of people could get off the dole in this way. They also wanted to make Newfoundlanders less dependent on the cod fishery, which had let them down in the past. Plans were made to open new land settlements in other parts of Newfoundland. Young men who had graduated from college and knew how to do land surveys were brought to Markland to train as managers for the new projects.

Part Five
Markland Grows

The men who came to Markland were not paid for their work. Instead, they could take food and goods from the community store. A family of three could take up to $6.03 a month. On relief, a family of three only got about $3.30, so people at Markland did better than people on the dole. But the money that each man owed was recorded. The trustees hoped everyone would be able to repay the government later, when they could support themselves on their farms.

When families came to Markland, everyone got clothing. This cost between $70 and $100 per family. At this time, a man's winter coat cost about $10, and heavy winter boots cost

$5. The cost of buying clothes for each family was so high because their own clothes were worn out.

The trustees wanted to be fair about letting people into Markland. People were chosen on a first come, first serve basis. They were not asked questions about religion. But they were asked if there was any tuberculosis or insanity in the family. They were also asked to list all their household goods, including woodstoves, dishes and cooking pots.

The trustees who ran Markland had good intentions. They worked very hard for no pay. They tried to provide a good standard of living for the people in Markland. At the same time, they said some odd things in their reports. For example, in 1934 they wrote, "the children of Newfoundland have not learned to play. Any stranger motoring through the country is struck by the idleness of the children in the outports. Rarely are they seen playing games. Very few of them know how to swim and they apparently have no interests with which to occupy themselves."[6]

To fix this, the people running Markland ran a day camp for the children for two weeks in the summer of 1934. The children were given uniforms, like boy scouts and girl guides. They were called Beothuks. The trustees reported to the Commission of Government, "these children had very little idea of discipline and practically no capacity for amusing themselves. During the fortnight the camp was run, the children improved tremendously both in physique and morale." A fortnight is two weeks. At the camp, the children learned to play games and to sing in groups.

The trustees believed that education of children was very important. Unlike all the other schools in Newfoundland, the schools at Markland were non-denominational. They were run without help from churches. Every child was given soap, a towel, a toothbrush and tooth powder to use at school. The children were being educated to become farmers. They looked after a school vegetable garden and helped to care for the cows that provided the school with milk. Every day, they helped to fix their own school lunches. This was to make sure they ate well, and to teach them to cook.

The trustees had a lot of control over the lives of the people in Markland. Children would only be allowed to take the exams of the Council of Higher Learning if a doctor approved. These tests had to be taken before children could go on after finishing school. The trustees said, "Dr. Grieve advises the Trustees that the forcing of children for examinations is a too common practice in Newfoundland and leads to many a nervous breakdown." It seems unlikely many nervous breakdowns really were caused by exams. Now, we take it for granted that only the parents have the right to make a decision like that.

By December, 1934, over 2,500 people had applied to come to Markland. Six families waiting for better houses lived in five log cabins, and 60 houses were either completed or being built. One barn was finished, and another was under way. A "staff house" was being built, and the community store had a 32 foot front.

Most settlers spent the first winter cutting logs for lumber. A sawmill was built where two rivers met. After spring planting, the Marklanders moved on to road construction, land clearing, and sawing logs into lumber. By January, 1936, there were 120 homes, all

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[6] "Interim Report on Markland, 1934," p. 9.

occupied, 2 sawmills, a store, two schools and 17 community buildings. About 600 people lived in six small communities strung out along the road in places where the land was good for farming.

The trustees wanted to take care of the people who came to Markland. The doctor in Whitbourne was paid $600 a year to give Marklanders medical care. The trustees also looked for a dentist who would visit. In 1936, a district nurse who visited Markland found that all the children were of normal weight for their ages. This was good news because many children in Newfoundland did not get enough to eat in the Depression.

Part Six
Trouble in Markland

Things were going well in Markland, but not everyone was happy. Many people who wanted to come to Markland could not get in. Some people thought it was unfair for the government to give so much help to just a few families. Others thought it would be better to spend the money on the fishery. Also, because so many people were waiting to get in to Markland, the families that settled there were easy to replace. The trustees had a lot of control over their lives. People could not leave Markiand without the permission of the manager. They could not invite anyone to visit without permission. It was not difficult to get into trouble.

In the spring of 1936, the children of a man named Thomas Butt got into trouble for making faces at their teacher, Clara Cochius.[7] They were suspended from school. A few days later, Frederick Emerson, who was still helping to run Markland, visited Mrs. Butt. She did not seem sorry for the way her children had behaved. She said she would rather teach her children at home than send them to school. This was not allowed. She was warned that her family could be thrown out of Markland. She told Mr. Emerson that he should give her notice in writing if her family was going to be sent away. The next day, the Butt family was given a "notice of dismissal." They had to leave Markland.

Other Marklanders did not think this was fair. On the next Sunday afternoon, some of them held a meeting in the yard of one of the sawmills. They appointed a committee of seven men to deal with this problem. One of the men was W. J. Frampton, who became their leader. They also asked Clara Cochius, the teacher, why the Butt family had been dismissed. She said Mr. Emerson had acted on her advice.

The committee met again and decided to have a meeting for all Marklanders on Tuesday, April 28. They were given permission to hold this meeting, but were told not to have it during work time. At the Tuesday meeting, the Marklanders drew up a petition to protest the dismissal of the Butt family. One of the managers went to the meeting. When he asked why they were holding the meeting, the men said it was for "the purpose of protecting their families from dismissal from Markland for matters pertaining to the school."[8] The petition was signed by 88 members of the settlement. It was sent to a manager to be forwarded to the Trustees of Markiand and the Commission of Government.

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[7] Clara Cochius was the daughter of Rudolph Cochius. The information that follows is taken from a newspaper story, Both Sides of "Markland Situation Are Stated," *Daily News*, 6 May 1936, p. 3.
[8] Letter from A. Babcock to Governor Humphrey Walwyn, the Provincial Archive of Newfoundland and Labrador, Governor's letters, GN Sec 203/36.

Credit: PANL, photo number VA 5 6/5-4.

Picture Three

A Women's Craft Group

Sewing and craft groups were formed for the women who came to live in Markland. The people who ran Markland hoped that these women would learn to sew and knit. They wanted to make sure that women could make most of the clothes their families needed.

Early the next morning, the seven men on the committee that organized the meeting were told that they were also dismissed from the settlement, as of May 7, 1936. It must have been a shock for these men to find that this could happen just because they held a public meeting and made a petition. They were going to lose the houses they lived in, their jobs and their futures as farmers in Markland. In the week of May 7, five of the men on the committee came to St. John's to see the governor, Humphrey Walwyn. They asked for an investigation into the way Markland was being run. They also asked not to be dismissed from Markland until after the investigation was over. In their petition to the governor, these men said that Markland was being run in a way that "offend[ed], in every way, the principles of liberty, justice and fair dealing."[9]

The trustees of Markland said that the Butt family had been expelled for keeping their children out of school. In a letter to Governor Walwyn, Frederick Emerson said, "there has always been...at Markland, people who have always given a certain amount of trouble since they first arrived." The trustees said that the seven members of the committee had been told not to hold their meeting in regular working hours, but they did and that was why they were dismissed. Governor Humphrey Walwyn had just arrived in Newfoundland. Maybe he did not think he knew enough about the situation to make his own decision. He told the men he had been advised that their dismissal "was justifiable."

After they saw Governor Walwyn, these men could do nothing more to prevent their families from being thrown out of Markland. If Newfoundland had an elected government at the time, they could have gone to their member of the House of Assembly. But the Commission of Government was not elected, it was appointed. The Commission of Government did not have to respond to the concerns of ordinary people because it could never be voted out of office.

At this time, the St. John's *The Evening Telegram* said that about 80 families had left Markland "some voluntarily, others being expelled for various reasons."[10] If this is true, it means that more than half of the families at Markland were replaced in the first two years. *The Evening Telegram* also said that some Marklanders were unhappy because they had asked to use one of the schools for Easter services, and this was not allowed.

But not everyone who lived in Markland was unhappy. In fact, 21 men who lived in Markland at community number four sent a letter to newspapers in St. John's in May, 1936. It was a copy of a letter addressed to the trustees of Markland. The letter said, "we hereby state that you gentlemen have our loyal support and cooperation. We also state that we are satisfied with the present management of Markland and are prepared to stand by the decisions made by the staff which are approved by the Board." They were also happy with the schools, and ended by saying, "we are satisfied with the treatment we are receiving in Markland and are striving to make this scheme a success."[11]

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[9] The original petition signed by five men from Markland is found in the Provincial Archive of Newfoundland and Labrador, in the Governor's Letters, GN Sec 203/36.
[10] *Evening Telegram*, May 9, 1936, p. 7.
[11] Letter to the editor, the *St. John's Daily News*, 18 May 1936, p. 4.

Part Seven
The Markland Experiment Ends

Even with these problems, the land settlement project grew. In September, 1936, 25 new families were settled at Haricot, 12 miles south of Markland. New settlements were also started at Brown's Arm near Lewisporte, at Lourdes on the Port au Port Peninsula, and at Midland near Deer Lake. But the land settlement program was not working. When Markland was started in 1934, the trustees were sure that families could become self-supporting. They believed it would cost between $600 to $800 to get each family started. After that, the families would not need any government help. In fact, they hoped people would be able to repay all the money that was spent to set them up.

This never happened. By 1937, the government began to cut back. At its peak, Markland had supported 210 families. By 1937, the number of families at Markland (including Haricot) was 136. That year, the number fell to 94. Some of the people who left were miners from Bell Island who went back to the mines when they could get jobs. The people who stayed in Markland were worried. They did not own the houses they lived in. They did not own the land they farmed. They never saw cash and everything they took from the community store got them deeper into debt. No one knew how the debts were to be paid off, or when they would own their houses and land.

In 1937, an unnamed government official who visited Markland wrote that all of the settlers in Markland were "keen to know when they are going to get rights on their houses and surrounding land. They want to be told plainly how and when they can clear their debts and how and when they can get possession of sufficient cleared land to give them a fair prospect of maintaining themselves on the land."

Thomas Lodge continued to believe that land settlement was a good idea. He thought the government was making a mistake by cutting back on the Markland project. Later, he wrote that it cost just as much to keep the smaller number of families on the land. He said,

> Anyone who drove through the Markland settlement in August 1938 could have seen for himself that settlers were working on their land, that somehow or other land had been cleared and was bearing good crops...He would have seen that some steads were better worked than others, some houses tidier than others, some crops better than others. In other words, he would have appreciated that ordinary human beings were involved. If he had been able to contrast what he saw at Markland with what he could have seen at say Upper Island Cove, 30 miles away, there could have been left in his mind no shred of a doubt that this was a project worthy of encouragement. It might require a year more or less, two or three acres more or less, before complete independence would be attained.[12]

Lodge believed that Marklanders needed more help to market their products. They could not get eggs and ducks to markets in St. John's. Lodge said that one family had eaten ducks until they were sick of them. The Newfoundland Hotel would have paid a good price for fresh ducks, but no one helped the Marklanders sell what they grew.

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[12] Lodge, p. 189

Credit: PANL, photo number VA 56/5-9.

Picture Four

A Horse-Drawn Scythe

A scythe is a tool used to cut hay. Most scythes are hand tools. This man is cutting hay with a scythe that is pulled by a horse. As land was cleared at Markland, people stopped farming together. Each family began to farm small plots of land.

Credit: PANL, photo number VA 56/5-5.

Picture Five

"Steads"

The people who lived at Markland called their plots of land "steads." This is short for homestead, another word for farm. When people came to Markland, they believed that they would own their steads. After many years, they still did not know how to settle their debt with the government so that they could own the houses they lived in and the land that they farmed.

In 1938, about 100 more acres of land were cleared in Markland, bringing the total amount of cleared land to 300 acres. But, by this time, the government knew that settlers in Markland would never be able to repay the money that had been spent on them. In fact, it seemed most people would have a hard time supporting themselves and their families by farming.

That year, the government wrote off the money that had been spent on Markland: $142,304. This means that the government did not expect to get the money back. As of January 1939, the settlers in Markland were given $134.40 cash a year for a family of 6. This is the same amount of money as they would be given on relief. Also, each family took over 25 acres of land to farm. In 1940, a furniture factory employed people at Markland. But in 1941, the government decided to end the land settlement. This was done because more than 75% of the money spent each year was used to support the community, and only about 25% was spent on farming. By 1945, there were only 56 families, 395 people, left in Markland. World War II had started, and it was easier for people to find jobs.

In 1986, 319 people lived in Markland. Today, people still farm in the area. Recently, a new business that makes blueberry wine has started there.

Part Eight
Did We Learn Anything from Markland?

Today, the land settlement at Markland seems like nothing more than a strange story from Newfoundland's past. In other places, New Brunswick for example, land settlement worked better. The land at Markland was hard to clear and farm. Newfoundland does not have a good climate or good soil for farming.

Markland showed that people need to have some control over their own lives. The trustees who ran Markland meant well, but they tried to decide many things for the settlers that adults expect to decide for themselves. Today we feel that decisions about the education of our children, about freedom of movement, and freedom of association (who we invite to visit our homes, for example) are basic rights. People in Markland could, and did, lose their homes and jobs for doing things we take for granted. If the people in Markland had been allowed to help decide how the project was run, more of them might have stayed. Markland might have been less expensive and more successful.

Markland was supposed to help people get off relief. It did not do that because people could not support themselves by farming on that land. In the Depression, many people thought it was wrong to give relief because people might never want to work again. Although Markland did not succeed, it showed that people who had been on relief would work very hard to support their families when they were given the chance.

Notes for Instructors

A look at Markland raises many questions about the nature of social assistance, "make work" projects, "workfare" and income support. Attitudes towards those on social assistance, and the relationship between those in authority and those who partake of social programs are also at issue in this piece. The fear that adequate social assistance will somehow make people unwilling or unable to work to support themselves is a theme that still crops up in the news media, and even in political policy papers today. You may wish to discuss what the experience of people in Markland says about these questions.

The section "Trouble in Markland" and the final section "Did We Learn Anything from Markland?" are relevant to a discussion of basic rights and freedoms. (See the Integrated Unit GOVERNMENT AND THE LAW, Rights and Freedoms, pp. 45-46 in the ABE Level I *Instructor's Handbook*.) Examination of the Commission of Government era can help to show students what happens to basic rights in a non-democratic system. A number of other essays in this series also look at Newfoundland and Labrador during the Depression and address similar issues. See Carmelita McGrath's "Dole and Desperate Measures: Life in the Great Depression in Newfoundland" and "Hard Boots and a Hoe," Kathryn Welbourn's "Pierce Power and the Unemployed Riot of 1935," and Ed Kavanagh's "'Those Eighty-Eight Unfortunates:' Logging in Newfoundland in the 1930s."

Topics for Discussion

1. Government-sponsored employment projects, then and now.

2. How to make feelings known to those in political power under the present, democratic system, and how this has changed since Commission of Government.

3. Basic rights and freedoms, personal and political.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why did the Commission of Government think that land settlements like Markland were a good idea?

2. How did people feel about being at Markland at first? How did their feelings change over time? Why did the way they feel change?

3. What were the main problems at Markland? List them. Were some problems more important than others?

4. What is a petition? Have you ever signed one? What sorts of things do people make petitions for in your community? What would make you want to make a petition? How does this compare with other people in your class?

5. Do you think anything could have been done to make Markland more successful?

6. What did we learn from Markland? Is anything that we learned from Markland useful to know today?