

Chapter 4

How the People were Governed

Evolution of Government

- In 1800, people had no say in government, naval governors in charge.
- NL is granted official colonial status in 1824
- Representative Gov't granted in 1832
- Responsible Gov't came in 1855

Naval Governors

- 1800s, Newfoundland/Labrador seen as a fishing station, not a settlement
- Naval governor was appointed to run the area each year by the British government
- There was settlement in many places, St. John's was growing, but the governor only stayed here for part of the year.
- Problems in fishery and no money led to riots in winter 1817-1818
- Governor instructed to stay in the colony year-round after that
- "Winter of the Rals" – riots, starving people, all kinds of issues
- Governor Pickmore died in St. John's that winter – see Did You Know? P.71

Crown Colony

- Newfoundland became a Crown Colony in 1824. Still under control of British Gov't
- Civil Governor could seek advice of an appointed local council.
- Reported directly to the British Government and remained under their control

Sir Thomas John Cochrane **Civil Governor 1825-1834**

- Energetic Governor
- Built Government House
- Opposed Representative Government
- Representative Gov't came anyway in 1832, he promised to cooperate, but this did not work out.

- He was in constant conflict with reformers, including the Catholic Bishop (Fleming)
- He was recalled to England – he and his daughter were pelted with filth on their way to the wharf while leaving town.

Representative Government

- Representative Gov't in 1832
- 15 members of the House of Assembly, representing 9 electoral districts.
- Members of the assembly were elected by the people
- Men over 21 living here for 1 year could vote
- Women and poor were disenfranchised – no right to vote.
- Governor and Council appointed by England – had the power
- Assembly could only suggest new laws
- Members of Representative Council represented the wealthy merchants, the Assembly members represented the poor and fishermen.
- Newspapers showed many political cartoons and took sides on issues

Responsible Government

- Reformers wanted change and looked for Responsible Government
- Governor have no real power
- Have to follow advice of executive council
- Executive council picked from elected assembly
- Party with most seats was the ruling party
- Real hands in power of the people
- Reformers wanted this
- Governor did not want this style of gov't
- Executive council oppose as well
- Both not want to lose their power
- Argued to the British government that this should not be brought into Newfoundland
- British Government agreed with reformers
- Newfoundland granted responsible government in 1855
- Phillip Francis Little becomes first Premier
- The style of government stay in place till 1934