

CHAPTER 7 THE INTERWAR YEARS

1919-1938

Land Based Industry

- Newfoundland government tried to create new employment opportunities to create jobs for a growing population
- The staple industry- the fishery- could no longer completely support Newfoundland especially with falling fish prices
- Business people tried to create economic diversification – jobs in different sectors of the economy

□ Mining

- Copper and iron were established as valuable resources
- Buchans- 1925- ore contained zinc, copper, gold and silver
- The town was built and owned by the company and developed rapidly
- Within 5 years they had a mill, church, school, hospital and hydroelectric plant

St. Lawrence

- Discovery of fluorspar led to the opening of the mine in 1933
- Head of the mine Walter Siebert, demanded that workers mine 2000 tons of the ore before getting paid.
- Desperate workers agreed
- Workers only received 15cents per hour
- The first mines were open pit and then later went far beneath the surface which had devastating effects on worker health

Bell Island

- Iron ore mine from 1895 -1966
- Located in Conception Bay tunnels would snake out 5 kilometers under the sea
- Two 10 hour shifts a day(not including 1 hour lunch breaks) six days a week until 1943
- Switch to three eight hour shifts but must make twenty car quota
- Very few safety standards for clothing until 1950s

Forestry

- After WWI Grand Falls and Corner Brook became important centres for newsprint
- Expansion of forest industries led to the growth of new towns
- Greater access to interior and use of resources affected the traditional aboriginal way of life
- A “Grand Falls Job” was considered a comfortable, safe and secure job

Forestry

- High demand for lumber caused creation of 200 sawmills from 1890-1900
- International demand for newsprint created need for a second pulp and paper mill
- Corner Brook mill opened in 1925, many people moved there to work in the mill or the hydroelectric plants that had been built to supply the power
- Mi'kmaq also worked as loggers as fur prices fell

Forestry Towns

- Glenwood and Badger logging towns
- Deer Lake and Bishop's Falls grew around hydroelectric plants
- Bishop's Falls was also the site of a wood pulp mill in 1911, it began to pump pulp to the mill in Grand Falls but stopped in 1952 and mill closed
- Botwood became important as a port for Grand Falls to support the mill

Labrador

- Pre-1900 interior home to Innu and some trappers
- High fur prices and forestry projects post 1900 led to an increase in the Upper Lake Melville area
- Population growth led to problems: fewer Caribou made Innu suffer causing them to move to the coast

Labrador Boundary Dispute

- Quebec and Newfoundland argued over the interior
- Nfld. allowed loggers to cut trees west of the Hamilton river which Quebec claimed as theirs
- Question was put to the British Privy council in 1907 (highest court in Britain)
- Dispute resolved in 1927 Nfld awarded current boundary (Quebec still not happy !!)
- All the area which the rivers flowed to the Atlantic Ocean

INDUSTRIAL TOWNS

- Unlike fishery, men had a steady income and earned higher pay
- These towns were company towns and all areas were controlled by the company
- Improved services for residents but still some negative feelings
- higher standard of living and increased awareness of urban lifestyles

Women in towns

- Cared for children and looked after the household
- Men were often employed exclusively; some young women moved to St. John's, Canada or the United States to find work

1929 Tidal wave

- November 18, 1929
- Underwater earthquake about 400 km offshore caused a tsunami that hit the Burin Peninsula at 100 km/hr



- Waves measured 7 to 15 meters high (21 to 45 feet)
- Result: 27 dead, much destruction over 40 communities including houses, schools, boats etc.

The Great Depression

- Major downturn in the economy
- Demand for fish decreased, prices fell, production declined and layoffs were common



- Government revenue declined and they were too deep in debt to borrow any more (100 million by 1930)



- Outport communities relied on cultivating land, fishing for themselves etc. to survive
- Urban areas: forced to go on relief, church groups and generosity of family and neighbors



“Going on the Dole”

- This term refers to people who were forced to go on government relief
- Amount depended on number of family members:
 - family of four received \$7.70/month while a family of ten received \$17.00
- This was considered a disgrace and not easy to receive as people had to prove they were in dire need

St. John's Riot of 1932

- People were frustrated and angry at their poor circumstances
- Government tried to raise funds by taxing imported food goods, but this made essential food items more expensive
- They also laid off government workers to save money adding to the unemployed
- Accusations of corruption against PM Richard Squires made matters worse

St. John's Riot of 1932

- April 5, 1932 a peaceful demonstration set for the Colonial building by members of the opposition and other political opponents
- Tensions were high and a crowd grew outside

- Police cleared the steps with batons and protesters stormed the building
- Several people including police were injured and the PM barely escaped out the back of the building and brought to safety

