

Newfoundland marks 25th anniversary as a Canadian province

In a ceremony in St. John's Newfoundland on March 31, Premier Frank Moores lighted a flame in front of Confederation Building, the provincial legislature, to mark the beginning of Newfoundland's twenty-fifth year as a province of Canada. About 500 people attended the flame-lighting ceremony, which was preceded by music and songs in the foyer of the government building. In communities throughout the province bonfires burned in celebration of what the provincial government calls a six-month anniversary party.

Mr. Moores paid tribute to former Premier Joseph Smallwood and to others who had contributed to bring Newfoundland into Confederation in 1949. "Newfoundland," said Mr. Moores, "is moving into a new period of maturity, away from such labels as 'new Canadians' and the 'youngest province'."

"We must now see ourselves simply as Canadians and a province just like any other — but with one exception — we must work and strive to make our province the strongest economic and social link in the Confederation chain," he declared.

Major events

Among the major events will be the visit of "entertainment caravans" to some 450 communities in the province during the summer. "Provincial Weeks" to be held in ten different locations in Newfoundland, will include banquets and other festivities in honour of the other provinces and two territories which, it is hoped, will be attended by their premiers and other ministers. During each week a geographic feature of the area will be renamed for the province being commemorated.

Newfoundland's history

In August 1583, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, a half-brother of Sir Walter Raleigh, took possession of the island on behalf of the English but various attempts to colonize it remained unsuccessful and close to 300 years were to elapse before Newfoundland began its development as a true colony.

Until 1832, Newfoundland was ruled by a governor under instructions from



Corner Brook, Newfoundland

(National Film Board photo)

the British Colonial Office. In that year, in response to continuing demands by residents, a legislature was brought into existence and the governor and his executive became responsible to it in the year 1855.

When the question of federation of the British North American colonies was first raised in 1858, Newfoundland showed some interest. The colony was not invited to the Charlottetown Conference in 1864, which, although originally called to discuss only a union of the three maritime provinces, developed into a conference of all the mainland colonies. At the Quebec Conference, later in the same year, Newfoundland was represented by a bi-party delegation. Although they had no power to commit the Newfoundland Government, the members of the delegation were in favour of union. No action was taken before Confederation became effective and when, in 1869, the

Government went to the country on a confederation platform it was decisively defeated. Confederation negotiations were reopened in Ottawa in April 1895, but failure to agree on financial terms led to the abandonment of the talks.

Critical financial situation

Newfoundland suffered severe financial problems during the Great Depression and could not continue to be self-supporting. By 1933, the financial situation had become so critical that the Government of Newfoundland asked the British Government to appoint a royal commission to investigate conditions. On the strength of their recommendations, the parliamentary form of government was suspended and Government by Commission was inaugurated on February 16, 1934.

During the Second World War, Newfoundland's financial position improved

Some strange place names of Newfoundland

Newfoundland has, perhaps the most unusual collection of place names of any country in the world. Consider, for instance: Jerry's Nose; Nick's Nose Cove; Come-by-Chance; Blow-me-down; Lushes Bight; Bumble Bee Bight; Ha Ha Bay; Run-by-guess; Right-in-the-Run Island; Bleak Joke Cove; Calves Nose; Nancy Oh; Little Hooping Harbour; Snake's Bight and, of course, Joe Batt's Arm.

Those who experienced hardship or disaster on the rugged coastline, probably gave the province the following: Gripe Point; Bad Bay; Bleak Island; Misery Point; Famine Point; Wild Bight; Breakheart Point; Famish Gut; Savage Cove; Confusion Bay; Wreck Cove; Bareneed; and Empty Basket.