

factual. Some might even be classed as journalism at its meritorious best, some unfortunately, was misleading.

To the traveller who stops long enough to inquire into the history of Newfoundland, or contemplates the immense physical obstacles and political adversities against which her people have struggled, initial amazement quickly turns to admiring wonder at the progress achieved. The island is largely composed of forbidding rock formations. The soil that does exist is unproductive and generally not suited to agriculture. Summer seasons are short, and the weather during the rest of the year is frequently disagreeable. To offset these undesirable factors, Providence provided extensive fishing reserves, untold mineral wealth and settlers with the grim tenacity of nation builders.

In the hundred years following John Cabot's voyage of 1497, interest in the vast fishing resources of the waters surrounding Newfoundland grew apace. Portuguese, British and French fleets paid annual visits. A flourishing industry developed, which has continued to the present day. In 1583 the island was formally declared a possession of the British Empire. The proclamation was read by Sir Humphrey Gilbert in what is now the city of St. John's. From then until Confederation with Canada, the colony has belonged to England, although several invasions by the French met with temporary success. Many of the early settlements were demolished under the cruel heel of conquest and war. The city of St. John's was destroyed no less than three times between 1696 and 1708.

During the same period unscrupulous fishing interests did everything in their power to discourage colonization, as they were afraid it would interfere with their supremacy over the country's resources. At one time the influence of these factions was sufficiently powerful to persuade the Parliament of England to pass a law making it an offence to settle permanently in Newfoundland, and all build-

ings within six miles of the coast were ordered destroyed. Also, the captain of any fishing vessel returning to England after a season in Newfoundland was fined 100 pounds for any member of his crew who had been left behind.

Nevertheless, in spite of these centuries of travail, colonization did occur. People came and settled and stayed. Today the 6,000 miles of coast line is dotted with hundreds of towns and villages that are already ancient. They contain approximately 90 per cent of the island's population; the vast interior of the province being for the most part still uninhabited.

Police and judicial administration in Newfoundland is of course as old as the colony itself, although in the early days it stemmed from a rather haphazard and ruthless organization. A system of "Rule by Fishing Admirals" was endured for almost a hundred years, until the first governor, Captain Osborne, was appointed in 1729. Previous to that time the first fishing admiral to arrive at the island each spring became ex-officio Commander-in-Chief for the ensuing season. No consideration was given to qualifications for the task, and most of these self-appointed officials lacked the rudiments of even an elementary education. The system worked admirably to the advantage of the merchants and fishing enterprises, whose only interest was in the exploitation of the colony's resources, but it rendered development of the country for all other purposes quite impossible.

Governor Osborne was vested with authority by the Privy Council in London to build courthouses and appoint justices of the peace. About this time an initial attempt at civic government was made, and the first municipal laws made their appearance. This necessitated consideration being given to the organizing of some type of police authority. A protective association was formed comprising residents, presumably on a volunteer basis. A unique variation of this same idea was still in effect in 1807.