

Commission of Government

Many Newfoundlanders had lost confidence in the political system and Britain appointed a Commission of Government to replace the system of responsible government. The government could barely pay on its debts so Canada and Britain would give them money if they agreed to a royal commission to investigate their affairs. The commission suggested that the leaders of the government were incompetent and were the cause of all of Newfoundland's financial problems. It was suggested that responsible government be abandoned in favor of a Commissioned Government. The legislature approved the recommendations and voted themselves out of existence.

Commission Policies

Although the commissioned government did not have to answer directly to Newfoundlanders they did seek to provide Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with the things they needed. Newfoundlanders could no longer vote for their leaders and had no influence over the appointed leaders.

Some of their policies were:

- Land Settlement Scheme: was designed to create farming communities and settle the unemployed people on the land. To qualify for the program families had to be receiving government assistance and have one adult male to work and family members to help out. Many people on the farms found it very difficult and lonely because they were away from extended family and friends. Many moved back to previous communities causing the scheme to fail.
- Education: the commission government founded the Department of Education in 1920 and later in 1925 created school for teacher training because they felt that many teachers were inadequately trained. They were able to tackle many problems, increase the number of schools and made it law that all school-aged children attend school.
- Health Care: government was much less involved with healthcare in the 1920's than it is today. Government provided funding, but most of the responsibility for the operation was done by private groups. Many British nurses that were working in small outports were paid with money raised by the sale of items like scarves, hats, socks and sweaters that were hand-knitted by the women in these small communities. By 1934 the government

had taken over healthcare with its major concerns being disease, childhood immunization and diet supplements (due to high incidence of vitamin related problems like tuberculosis, beriberi). The Department of Public Health and Welfare was established along with about a dozen well-staffed hospitals as well as a network of cottage hospitals.

- Law Enforcement: when the commission of government assumed office there was little police presence outside of the major centers so they established the Ranger Force. The men were well educated and carefully selected for the job. In the 15 years it existed, 204 men enlisted and served the many small remote communities of NL. They were replaced by the RCMP in 1950.