

# Social Studies 8

## Chapter 9: Moving Towards Confederation

### Part 1: National Convention

#### **a) Establishment of the National Convention**

After the prosperity of World War II, Newfoundland was considered to be self-supporting again and Britain decided in 1945 that representatives would be elected and called the national convention. These representatives would help Newfoundlanders decide what form of government they would want.

- Britain was afraid that an automatic return to self-government would lead to Newfoundland becoming economically dependent on Britain again.
- The National Convention would examine various forms of government and the choices would be voted upon in a national referendum (Newfoundlanders would vote on which form of government they wanted) in 1947.
- Little interest shown by the people in electing representatives, with eight members being elected by acclamation (no one ran against them).
- The Convention quickly divided into two sides: pro-confederate, led by Joseph R. Smallwood and anti-confederate, led by Peter Cashin.

#### **b) London and Ottawa Delegations**

Joey Smallwood believed that if Newfoundland were to return to self-government, it would soon spend its wartime surplus and return to a lower standard of living. He suggested that a delegation from the Convention go to Ottawa to see what Canada could offer Newfoundland. Britain agreed that delegations would visit both Ottawa and London to weigh what each country had to offer Newfoundland.

- The London delegation returned to Newfoundland after only two weeks. It had learned that Britain would not provide any financial support to Newfoundland if it decided to go back to responsible government.
- The Ottawa delegation, however, spent four months working with Canada to draw up draft terms of union. These terms were brought back to the National Convention to be debated. This meant Newfoundlanders could learn more about the Confederation issue and the referendum was delayed until 1948.

#### **c) Deciding the Options**

The National Convention went through a series of heated debates over whether or not Confederation with Canada should be placed on the referendum ballot.

- Most Convention members were anti-confederate, however, and the decision was made that Newfoundlanders would get to choose between two options:
  1. Commission of Government under Great Britain
  2. Return to Responsible Government
- Joey Smallwood, in the meantime, would continue to push for Confederation with Canada to be included as a third option, relying on the people of Newfoundland to take the issue all the way to London.