World War 2 and Newfoundland 1939-1945 Class Notes 2016

**Events Leading up to WW2**

The Great Depression

* During the years in between the two World Wars, there was an event

called the Great Depression.

* This was a major economic downturn triggered by a stock market crash in October 1929.
* This created a situation where many people lost their savings, their jobs, and people did not have enough money for basic needs.

The Dirty Thirties

* During the Great Depression, there was also a severe drought in various parts of the US and the Canadian prairie provinces that lead to severe dust storms.
* This lead to extreme poverty, starvation, and an increase in diseases caused by malnutrition.
* This was known as the Dirty Thirties.

The Great Depression and Newfoundland

* The Great Depression also impacted Newfoundland.
* Newfoundland was already struggling under a $100 million dollar debt caused by WW1 and building the railway.
* With the depression, the demand for salt fish fell dramatically.
* There was also a decrease in the demands for fur, iron ore and newsprint.
* There was an increase in diseases such as TB, starvation was rampant, and over 30% of people were on "the dole".
* The dole was an allotment of the equivalent of $1.80 per month in food rations. Families could only choose food from a select list. Ex. Molasses, fat back pork, beans, split peas, corn meal.
* Vegetables were added to the list for those in St. John's but people "around the bay" were expected to grow their own vegetables.

How the Great Depression impacted the World

* These events caused tensions because people's needs were not being met and this caused people to look for other ways to organize their society.
* People started turning away from democratic leaders and governments as they seemed to be unable to stop the economic downturn and unable to help people meet their basic needs.
* Everyday people turned to parties such as the Nazi Party who offered solutions, though extreme, and blamed 'outsiders' for their countries troubles.
* Leaders, such as Germany's Hitler and Italy's Mussolini, saw measures such as war as a solution to economic problems.

**WW2 Begins**

How did the Second World War start?

* German dictator Adolf Hitler invaded Poland Sept. 1st, 1939
* Britain and France declared war on Germany in response
* Italy and Japan joined Germany
* Soviet Union and United States joined Britain
* ALLIES (Democratic)

Britain, Canada, Australia, France, Russia, Newfoundland, United States (1941)

* AXIS Germany supporters (Non-democratic)

Germany, Italy, Japan

Where did World War II take place?

**THEATRE OF WAR**: the geographical location of a major battle

* This war was fought from the land, sea, and air. There was fighting in Europe during WW II. In addition to the European battle fronts, there were battles in :
* Asia
* Africa
* Australia

In addition, to the war in the Atlantic Ocean there were also naval battles in the

* Pacific Ocean
* Indian Ocean
* Mediterranean Sea

**Newfoundland Enlistment**

Newfoundland Regiment: (pg 189-191)

* At the outbreak of war Newfoundland was part of the British Empire. We did not recruit men for our Newfoundland forces like they did in World War I. Newfoundland men joined the British Armed Forces. This reduced the financial commitment to outfit the men. Britain would be responsible for the money to supply these soldiers. Due to the large number of Newfoundlanders who joined there were special units designated as “Newfoundland” units. This helped to keep the men together and allowed some level of comradeship between the men.

Women also enlisted for military service during the war. The Canadian Armed Forces had *three* women’s branches:

1. Women’s Royal Canadian Naval Service- these women served in Newfoundland, Canada, Northern Ireland and Scotland
2. Women’s Division of the Royal Canadian Air Force
3. Canadian Women’s Army Corps – on the first day of recruitment 126 women signed up in St. John’s

Newfoundland Troops Overseas: (pg 191)

* Involvement on the Oceans:

1. hundreds of ships on the Atlantic, Indian & Pacific Oceans

2. protected vital sea lanes during the Battle of the Atlantic

3. landed assault forces

4. withdrew troops from hostile shores

5. fought in major events (sinking of the Bismark)

* Involvement in the Air:

1. fought in the skies over Europe, North Africa,

Middle East and the Far East

2. served in the Royal Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force

3. helped guard Britain’s coasts from German air attacks

* Involvement on Land:

1. gunners served in several Field and Heavy regiments
2. many served with distinction
3. many served for more than five years
4. defensive duty in the Untied Kingdom & on battlefields

**PRISIONER OF WAR**: members of the enemy forces who were captured in an area of conflict.

**INTERNMENT CAMPS**: these were temporary places where people who had the same background (German, Japanese) as the enemy were held. They were considered to be civilian prisoners.

**INTERNEE**: a person held in an interment camp during the war

**THE WAR AT HOME: (pg 195)**

Volunteer Efforts

* The Women’s Patriotic Society (WPA) reassembled for WWII
* duties were similar to WWI, they worked 6 days a week to supply the troops with knit hats, surgical materials & more care to the troops locally
* all money raised went to the Newfoundland Central Council Branch of the British Red Cross Society
* The Newfoundland Patriotic Association (NPA) helped raise money for the families at home with two different plans.

1. One Percent Scheme- a voluntary donation of one percent of a salaried person’s pay before taxes
2. Fish-a-Man Fund- one fish from each fisherman each season

**Air Raids and Blackouts: (pg 201)**

* Air Raid: an air raid was an attack from the air by planes or bombers. Places dropped explosives on strategic locations often to destroy a military installation or ammunition station. Air raids were usually preceded by air raid sirens established in key locations to warn people.
* Blackouts: During WWII, blackouts meant that all visible light were extinguished and windows and doors were covered with black material or shutters. Lights on wharves were turned off, cars had to have visors over their headlights. Because Newfoundland & Labrador are strategically located it meant we were at very serious threat of attack from submarines or planes. Black outs were extremely important to remain safe from attack.

LIVING IN ST. JOHN’S:

* There were over 1000 volunteers trained with the St. John’s Air Raid Precautions organization (ARP). These people would walk the streets at night to make sure all lights were out. There were also curfews enforced on the citizens. These types of restrictions on people’s daily lives were seen as an important scarf ice to ensure the security of all people. The Royal Canadian Air Force would have regular fly-overs to ensure the city was safely blacked out. The entrance to St. John’s Harbor known as Fort Amherst was torpedoed by a German submarine in 1941. In 1942, the S.S. Caribou, a passenger ferry, was hit by a German torpedo, 137 people died in that attack.

The German Weather Station of Labrador: (205)

* Germans needed weather information to plan their movements. They landed in Labrador in secret and set up a weather station so they could have accurate weather reports. They tried to make the station look like it had been from Americans & the station remained a secret until 1970’s when an employee from the company that made the weather station found documents related to the site. The Canadian government took the station apart and it is now in a museum in Ottawa.

U-Boat Attacks in Newfoundland

The SS Caribou

* There were several U-boat attacks in Newfoundland waters. One of these was the sinking of the passenger ferry the S.S. Caribou. It was sunk Oct. 14th, 1942 at about 4 a.m. The Caribou was hit by a torpedo while travelling from Nova ?Scotia to Port Aux Basques. Of the 238 people on board 137 were killed, mostly women and children. It was mistaken for a freighter carrying grain. Its escort, the Grandmere, didn't follow correct procedure for escorting vessels. This allowed the u-boat to sneak up on the ?Caribou.

The Bell Island Attacks

* There was another attack in 1942 as well when ore carriers at Bell Island were torpedoed by u-boats. 69 sailors died in these attacks.
* On Sept. 5th 1942 the Saganaga, the Evelyn B., the Lord Strathcona, and the PLM 27 were anchored off Bell Island. They were suddenly attacked by u-boat 513. The Saganaga was struck and split in half. A second torpedo hit and the freight was thrown 91 m in the air and it sank in 15 seconds.
* Half hour after the Strathcona was hit twice and sank. The   
  Evelyn B. fired its gun but was not successful. Two months later on Nov. 2nd, 1942 the PLM 27 and the SS Rose Castle were sunk by a German U-boat.
* There is a memorial in Lance Cove Bell Island.

**Newfoundland’s Strategic Importance: (196)**

* Why were Canada and the United States determined to defend Newfoundland?

Following German’s invasion of France in 1940, an invasion of Britain seemed imminent. If that occurred it was a real possibility that Hitler would then set his sights on Newfoundland in order to control North America. As well we were already an important port for shipping goods to Britain and Hitler wanted to cut this connection. So Canada and the US were eager to defend us.

Aviation: (197)

* What two Newfoundland locations are along great circle aviation routes? a) Gander b) Goose Bay
* Where was the air field built by the Commission of Government in 1936? Cobb’s Siding which is present day Gander.
* Where was the seaplane base located? Botwood was where the seaplane base was located.
* Why was Gander so important for transatlantic flight? Gander is along the Great Circle Route so it is an important point for refueling and as a stop over point.
* Where did the Canadian government build air bases? (198) The Canadians built bases Gander, Botwood Torbay, and Goose Bay.
* Where did the American military establish air bases? The Americans built bases at Argentia, Fort Pepperrell (Pleasantville), and Harmon Air Force Base in Stephenville.

North Atlantic Ferry program

* In the North Atlantic Ferry, Britain’s Royal Airforce decided to fly the planes from the United States to Europe, with NL as the stopover. New planes were transferred from factory cities in the US to Montreal and then flown to Gander or Goosebay then onto Britain.
* What were two reasons Americans did not ship planes to Europe in pieces and put them together over there? There was the risk of attack from enemy submarines and dismantling the planes and shipping them would be costly and dangerous.

Destroyers for Bases Deal

* The US signed the Destoyers for Bases Deal with Britian in 1940. In this arrangement, the US agreed to give Britain 50 destroyers ( a type of boat) to escort cargo ships across the Atlantic. In exchange the US was granted leases if 99 years to build bases on British territory.

**How did the War Impact Newfoundland**

1. ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE WAR

Economic Dislocation: when patterns of work are interrupted and people move from one type of employment to another.

Major Impacts:

-everyone who wanted to work had a job

-unemployment disappeared

- dependence on government assistance dropped dramatically

- men received better pay as British and Canadian soldiers

- the government developed a trans-island telegraph system

- regular businesses (paper mills, mining, schools, banks) lost employees they could not replace

- people left fishing, logging, and mining to work on the military bases and have a regular paycheck

- fishing, logging and mining had shortages of workers (economic dislocation- they moved to new jobs)

- women were hired for jobs they had never done before (cooks, waitresses, laundry workers, secretaries, stenographers, house keepers, and ambulance drivers on the bases) pg.207

-government was rescued from debt so that by 1945, Newfoundland was self-supporting

1. SOCIAL IMPACT OF WAR: (PG 209)

Newfoundland changed dramatically during the war. One-tenth of the population was military personnel. There were two places where military and civilians socialized:

1. The Caribou Hut (Water Street)
2. Knights of Columbus Hostel (Harvey Road)

These centers were to provide a friendly and welcoming place for military personnel and their families. Facilities included:

1. cafeteria
2. sleeping quarters
3. recreational areas
4. dances, concerts, sing-a-longs

Services were provided overseas very similar to the Caribou Hut. In St. John’s the “Wanders Club” was established. This organization brought newcomers into Newfoundland homes for hospitality and a home cooked meal. The WPA had an office in the Caribou Hut and it was a place for volunteers to coordinate with military personnel.

\*\*The following is a list of changes in Newfoundland caused by the military presence.

1. increase in dances, concerts and sporting competitions
2. approx. 200 marriages between Newfoundland women and military servicemen
3. many people resettled to other areas in North American and didn’t return
4. some people were forced to move from their land so military bases could be built (Argentia, Happy Valley)
5. housing shortages because of families joining their military family members stationed here
6. increase in venereal disease, single parenthood, alcoholism and rowdiness
7. different laws for Newfoundlanders and military personnel. Military personnel were tried in their own military court.
8. Military base was “foreign soil” which meant Newfoundlanders had no right to use/occupy the land.
9. French speaking areas of the island became English speaking when the military personnel outnumbered the civilian (Stephenville)
10. through the increase in news Newfoundlanders learned more about the way the rest of the world lived and worked
11. people were influenced by the newcomers,

a) ways of dress changed

b) new music/ movies

c) housing style/decoration changed

d) new cars were on the street (American)

12. demands for health care, education, and government services similar to those available in Canada and the US increased

**After the War**

* Prosperity and Change (pg 216)

After the war peoples’ lives had been changed forever:

1. we had better medical, education & social services
2. we had experienced a regular paycheck
3. we were unwilling to lose these advances

Newfoundland was not in debt at the end of this war. We had a bright economic future because:

1. fishing, mining & manufacturing began again
2. demand for salt-fish in Europe
3. demand for frozen cod in England & the US
4. demand for newsprint increased (pulp & paper mills)
5. rebuilding in Europe and new building in Canada increased demand for iron ore from Buchans and Bell Island

* this upswing did not continue because a battered Europe was unable to continue to purchase new items

Change in Work Force:

The fishing industry experienced the greatest decrease and the forestry industry had the greatest increase in the production of goods. Government and trade showed significant increases in the production of services. The opening of military installations in NL and Labrador made buying and selling products other than fish a reality. With increased prosperity, people demanded more education, health services and other government services. The role of government increased as laws were necessary to regulate areas such as land use, waterways and trade.