

Searching for the Past, Writing for the Present: Charles Ryle Fay and Newfoundland's Contested Past

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Article abstract

In the autumn of 1953 the Cambridge economic historian, C.R. Fay, presented a series of lectures at Memorial University based on his tours of the province. As a collector of all things Newfoundland and an observer of island's shifting place within empire, Fay laid the foundation for a cultural renaissance in Newfoundland studies. Ultimately, however, the scope of his project, his personal bias, and indifference to the island's historiography undermined his research and his significance as a historian of Newfoundland.

Searching for the Past, Writing for the Present: Charles Ryle Fay and Newfoundland's Contested Past

PETER LUDLOW

À l'automne de 1953, C.R. Fay, historien de l'économie de Cambridge, a présenté une série d'exposés à la Memorial University inspirés de ses voyages dans la province. Collectionneur de tout ce qui était de Terre-Neuve et observateur de la place changeante de l'île au sein de l'empire, Fay a posé les fondements d'une renaissance culturelle en études terre-neuviennes. Cependant, ses recherches et son importance en tant que spécialiste de l'histoire de Terre-Neuve ont été minées, en fin de compte, par l'étendue de son projet, son parti pris personnel et son indifférence envers l'historiographie de l'île.

In the autumn of 1953 the Cambridge economic historian, C.R. Fay, presented a series of lectures at Memorial University based on his tours of the province. As a collector of all things Newfoundland and an observer of island's shifting place within empire, Fay laid the foundation for a cultural renaissance in Newfoundland studies. Ultimately, however, the scope of his project, his personal bias, and indifference to the island's historiography undermined his research and his significance as a historian of Newfoundland.

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1953, CHARLES RYLE FAY, a distinguished Cambridge economic historian, traveled to St. John's, Newfoundland, to deliver a series of lectures on aspects of the province's history. The monologues, presented in the annex of the fledgling Memorial University's central building, were the product of considerable research and fieldwork. Fay's subsequent publication, *Life and Labour in Newfoundland: Based on Lectures Delivered at the Memorial University of Newfoundland*, enhanced his brief reputation as the British "high priest" of Newfoundland history while his partiality for collecting Newfoundland material from the archives of the United Kingdom played a noteworthy role in the establishment of a post-Confederation cultural renaissance in Newfoundland studies.¹ A decade before Farley Mowat and Harold Horwood proposed that Newfoundland engage in various cultural-historical projects, Fay used his "apostolic zeal" to put Newfoundland's narrative on record. When Joseph Smallwood told the Newfoundland Historical

1 Fay's colleagues regularly used the term "high priest of Newfoundland history" to describe the professor and his interest in the province. See R.C. Jarvis to Fay, 8 September 1952, Charles Ryle Fay Papers (CRFP), D/1571/6/8, Public Records Office, Northern Ireland (PRONI); C.R. Fay, *Life and Labour in Newfoundland: Based on Lectures Delivered at the Memorial University of Newfoundland* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1956).

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Society in 1966 that much of the island's heritage would disappear unless they acted "quickly to preserve it", he was echoing Fay's decade-old plea for Newfoundlanders to get their stories written down.² In retrospect, Fay might seem to be remarkable only for his obscurity. His Newfoundland publications have virtually disappeared from current scholarship. His erudition was not mentioned in Keith Matthews's influential article "Historical Fence Building: A Critique of the Historiography of Newfoundland" nor in Patrick O'Flaherty's *The Rock Observed: Studies in the Literature of Newfoundland*.³ In fact, by the 1960s, Fay's interventions had joined the heap of intriguing but interpretively sterile Newfoundland documents. His contributions had provided only modest analyses and offered nothing innovative to the historiography of the island.

Yet Fay, in reality, had a different objective. As a devotee of liberal imperialism – a conviction that Britain should cultivate the development of the dominions – as well as a scholar of the imperial economy, he perceived post-Confederation Newfoundland as representative of the new realities of empire.⁴ Visiting the island in 1952 and 1953, he sought evidence of industrialization, which he skillfully combined with commercial history to generate a Newfoundland narrative with an exclusively British past and a boundless Canadian future. In viewing the province through imperial spectacles, however, Fay had little understanding of the institutionalized sectarianism that characterized the island's society and little sympathy for those who had opposed Confederation in 1949. His personal prejudices and his paternalistic attitudes towards Irish Catholics ultimately stained his reputation as a researcher, and highlighted the contested nature of Newfoundland's past. As a collector of all things Newfoundland, however, and an acute observer of post-Confederation society, he was a significant figure.

C.R. Fay was born in Manchester, England, in 1884 and obtained his post-secondary education at King's College, Cambridge, and at the London School of Economics.⁵ At Cambridge he attained distinction in the Economics Tripos and was a prized student of Alfred Marshall, an influential economist of the late Victorian period.⁶ In the company

2 See James Overton, "Sparking a Cultural Revolution: Joey Smallwood, Farley Mowat, Harold Horwood and Newfoundland's Cultural Renaissance," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 16, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 199. For the quotation on Fay's "apostolic zeal," see *The Daily News* (St. John's), 17 November 1953.

3 Keith Matthews, "Historical Fence Building: A Critique of the Historiography of Newfoundland," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 74, no.1 (1978-79): 21-30; Patrick O'Flaherty, *The Rock Observed: Studies in the Literature of Newfoundland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979).

4 The philosophy of liberal imperialism was bred within Britain's Liberal Party in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Supporters were notable for their opposition to Irish Home Rule, the defense of free trade throughout the empire, and for supporting moderate social reforms. As a student of liberal imperialism, Fay believed that there were both ethical and commercial justifications for empire. See Carl Hodge, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Age of Imperialism, 1800-1914, Volume Two* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008), 418-20, and H.C.G. Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists: The Ideas and Politics of a Post-Gladstonian Elite* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

5 C.R. Fay, "King's College, Cambridge, 1902-6," *Dalhousie Review* 30 (January 1951): 329-34; *The Times* (London), 21 November 1961.

6 Fay often wrote and reminisced about Alfred Marshall. J.M. Keynes later credited him with being "perhaps the chief repository of Marshall Sagas." See John Maynard Keynes, *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes, Volume X, Essays in Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1972 [1933]), 223, and W.G. Constable, "Art and Economics in Cambridge," *The Eagle* LIX, no. 255 (April 1960): 23-9.

of other emerging intellectuals such as John Maynard Keynes, Fay became a leading British economic historian.⁷ In 1908 he published a celebrated study, *Co-operation at Home and Abroad: A Description and Analysis*, which investigated the organization and structure of cooperative credit as a “token of great economic and social development.”⁸ Sales of the book were brisk and its success expedited Fay’s election as a fellow of Christ’s College, Cambridge, and his appointment as a reader in economic history. In 1909 his interest in cooperatives brought him by rail across the vast expanses of the Canadian prairies to research the fledgling grain cooperatives in Saskatchewan. Six years later, while attached to the British General Headquarters during the Great War – he had been severely wounded and mentioned in dispatches – Fay had the task of collecting reports from the various machine gun units along the front. Consequently, he was in habitual contact with the Canadian Corps and was deeply impressed with the ingenuity of the colonial soldiers.⁹ Moreover, during the conflict, Fay also had the opportunity to fraternize with various Newfoundlanders, including Peter John Cashin, the son of Newfoundland Prime Minister Sir Michael Cashin, who served in the Machine Gun Corps.¹⁰

Fay returned to Cambridge in 1918 and composed a series of essays that were published together in 1920 as *Life and Labour in the Nineteenth Century*.¹¹ Although this popular publication suffered from a “loose discursiveness,” which came to be a recurrent trait in his scholarship, Fay argued that the narrow laissez-faire optimism of the late-18th century led British imperial officials to regard the colonies as “useless encumbrances” that ultimately culminated in the American Revolution. Parliament’s blunder was to allow the “tie of profit and loss” within imperial affairs to replace the “sense of common citizenship,” and only the liberal treatment of the colonies by statesmen such as William Huskisson revived imperial preference and safeguarded the empire.¹²

Fay perceived British imperialism through a prism of “informal empire,” a relationship formed largely through commerce and economic policy rather than

7 See Peter Koslowski, *Methodology of the Social Sciences, Ethics and Economics in the Newer Historical School: From Max Weber and Rickert to Sombart and Rothacker* (New York: Springer, 1997), 343.

8 C.R. Fay, *Co-operation at Home and Abroad: A Description and Analysis, Two Volumes* (London: P.S. King, 1908), 308.

9 C.R. Fay, “How Education Strengthens the Empire,” *The Empire Club of Canada Addresses* (Toronto: The Empire Club of Canada, 1923), 258.

10 Cashin routinely supplied Fay with interesting reminiscences of the Newfoundland Assembly. In response to Fay’s inquiry regarding Memorial University in 1952, Cashin wrote: “Rothermere was installed a short while ago as Chancellor amidst the usual glamour and eulogistic speeches. To use the Premier’s own words ‘We now have everything except a university. We have all the trimmings; all we need is the money to establish the university in a practical way’.” See Peter Cashin to Fay, 29 October 1952, CRFP, D/1571/2/6, PRONI, as well as *The Times*, 8 January 1925.

11 Fay had an eccentric personality. As a result of his lectures at the University of Toronto, some of his students attributed his idiosyncrasies to his having been “shell shocked” during the Great War. See David C. Colander and Harry H. Landreth, *The Coming of Keynesianism to America: Conversations with the Founders of Keynesian Economics* (London: Edward Elgar, 1997), 52.

12 C.R. Fay, *Life and Labour in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), 12-21.

conventional military or political dominance.¹³ He embraced the emerging post-war nationalism of the dominions, but campaigned for an “interchange of ideas” that would preserve the unanimity of empire.¹⁴ He was particularly attracted to Canada, and in 1921 wrote James Mavor, the Scottish-born professor of political economy at the University of Toronto, to inquire into the possibility of a teaching position. Despite his relative youth, Fay was a prodigious scholar with “something of a reputation,” and Mavor eagerly affixed him to a budding and dynamic Department of Political Economy.¹⁵

As a disciple of economic imperial unity, Fay was apologetic neither for imperialism nor for the trade through which it was fabricated. He aimed to investigate such commerce as a means of exposing the “real Canada,” and remarked in a 1923 speech to the Empire Club of Canada that his wider aspiration was to inform Britons on the broader economy of empire. This ambition resonated with Fay’s colleagues at Toronto, especially Harold Innis, who sought pioneering theories to explain the pattern of Canadian economic growth. Both Innis and Fay were absorbed by the influence of commerce on the development of North America, and sought to define Canadian economic expansion in terms of “successive staple exports.”¹⁶ Both contended that the cohesion of empire depended considerably on the evolution of staple trades with the industrialized mother country, and that this more than anything kept Canada British.¹⁷

Other emerging Canadian academics of the period espoused similar sentiments. Although no devotee of the imperial tradition, Arthur Lower conceded that Canada’s economic fortunes had depended upon its aggressive Protestant commercial ethic and faith in the British Empire.¹⁸ This interconnection between Canadian independence, imperial commercialism, and a Protestant work ethic compelled Fay to remark that Canadian notions of imperialism were “the sort after which he was feeling.”¹⁹ There were, of course, disagreements on the role of federalism. Fay was convinced, however, that federalism permitted the dominions to make “proper distribution

13 C. R. Fay, “The Movement towards Free Trade, 1820-53,” in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Volume Two*, ed. J. Holland Rose, A.P. Newton, and E.A. Benians (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 399. For an interesting critique of “informal empire,” see Phillip Buckner, “Was there a ‘British’ Empire? *The Oxford History of the British Empire* from a Canadian Perspective,” *Acadiensis* XXXII, no. 1 (Autumn 2002): 122-4.

14 Fay, “How Education Strengthens the Empire,” 252-60.

15 Harold A. Innis, “Memoir of Harold Adams Innis: Covering the Years 1894-1922,” *Canadian Journal of Communications* 29 (2004): 59; Donald Creighton, *Harold Adam Innis, Portrait of a Scholar* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), 154.

16 W.A. MacKintosh, “Innis on Canadian Economic Development,” *The Journal of Political Economy* 61, no. 3 (June 1953): 189-90; Robin Neill, *A History of Canadian Economic Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 146.

17 Harold A. Innis, *The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1940), 388. Fay cites Innis and draws the same conclusion in a 1934 publication on the imperial economy. See C.R. Fay, *Imperial Economy and its Place in the Formation of Economic Doctrine, 1600-1932* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), 54.

18 Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing, 1900-1970* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), 135.

19 C.R. Fay, review of Donald Creighton, *Harold Adams Innis: Portrait of a Scholar, The Economic Journal* 68 (December 1958): 823.

between local and general affairs” while allowing the central authority to cooperate with the “Mother Country and other members of the Empire.”²⁰

The concept of a sovereign, federal Canada with vibrant economic and cultural ties to Britain appealed to Fay. The Manchester historian Arthur Redford described him as a “reverent imperialist” who displayed a sincerity in this cause that at times prevented him from “maintaining a strict academic impartiality.”²¹ When Fay’s friend J.M. Keynes employed the term “colonial” to describe Canada’s post-war relationship with Britain, Fay contended that the remark was patronizing and might lead to an increase in undesirable American influence.²² Keynes’s argument that the dominions exploited the mother country was met with Fay’s assertion that an economic embargo on Canada by London would swiftly be countered by a “deliberately handsome offer of funds from New York.”²³ Fay also reacted harshly toward those Canadian provinces that appeared to contest the economic and political desirability of Confederation. He had especially unsympathetic words for politicians in Nova Scotia, who asserted that Confederation had been a detriment to their economy – dismissing the freight rate arguments behind the Maritime Rights movement and stating that it was “high time that Nova Scotia ceased from complaining and lived of herself.” He also argued “it was not as though Nova Scotia was disfranchised by federation” since “Tupper, Fielding and Borden, to mention only three, were of Nova Scotia and they played a decisive part in the fiscal system of Canada, for which it is the fashion of Nova Scotia to blame Ontario.”²⁴ Unlike Innis, who continually “attacked all schemes that involved the strengthening of the Ottawa government at the expense of the provinces,” Fay considered any transfer of control from dominion to province to be retrograde.²⁵ If not for Confederation, he argued in 1934, the Province of Nova Scotia would have been “sucked into its southern neighbor like Cuba.”²⁶ His congratulatory utterances to Ontario for “carrying the Dominion” and his dismissal of dissenting provinces foreshadowed arguments that he later espoused toward other populations who did not concur with his political views.²⁷

In 1930, after completing his obligations at Toronto, Fay returned to Cambridge.²⁸

20 C.R. Fay, *Two Empires* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1928), 7.

21 Arthur Redford, review of C.R. Fay, *Great Britain from Adam Smith to the Present Day*, *The English Historical Review* 44, no. 173 (January 1929): 146.

22 Fay and J.M. Keynes were close friends as undergraduates and in the early portion of their careers, but later they grew apart. Fay was more of a historian than a social scientist and contended that Keynes “didn’t believe in history”; instead, “he only wanted to use bits of it for his own purpose.” See Milo Keynes, *Essays on John Maynard Keynes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 220.

23 Robert Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes, Volume 2, 1920-1937* (London: Macmillan, 1992), 184.

24 C.R. Fay, “Review of the Report of the Royal Commission, Provincial Economic Inquiry, 1934,” *International Affairs* 15 (Jan-Feb 1936): 127.

25 Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 104.

26 Fay, “Review of the Report of the Royal Commission, Provincial Economic Inquiry, 1934,” 127.

27 Reviewing a book about the role of the British in India, Fay wrote that the publication “was timely” because it “virtually says to Indian Nationalists, this is what Englishmen in India have done for you. Can you do any better? And if so, exactly what?” See C.R. Fay, “Review of *Some influences that made the British Administrative System in India*,” *The Economic Journal* 50 (June 1940): 312.

28 Queen’s University (Kingston, ON) offered Fay the headship of its department of Economics and Political Science but he declined. See Frederick W. Gibson, *Queen’s University, Volume II* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1978), 56-7.

He remained a student of empire and employed his Canadian experiences to publish in 1934 *Imperial economy and its place in the formation of economic doctrine, 1600-1932*, which championed free trade as the chief method of ensuring dominion harmony.²⁹ Fay was a leader in the economic study of empire and was well qualified, so wrote the *Montreal Gazette*, to attempt such a survey.³⁰ By the end of the Second World War, however, Fay's liberal notions of empire were quickly becoming outdated. Burdened with tremendous financial expenditures and "anxious to alleviate economic hardships and sustain welfare reforms at home," both Labour and Conservatives in Britain conceded that the empire was not "worth the money."³¹ One of the pieces of empire that Britain was keen to unload was its oldest colony – Newfoundland. Established as a fishing station in the 16th century, Newfoundland was granted representative government in 1832 and autonomous dominion status in 1926.³² The island's economy, based primarily on the inshore fishery, newsprint, and mining in Conception and Notre Dame Bays, allowed it to remain self-supporting until crippling debt, an economic recession, and government corruption compelled the Newfoundland Assembly to suspend its self-governing status in 1934 in favor of a Commission of Government appointed by Westminster.³³

The inability of post-war Britain to finance overseas possessions such as Newfoundland troubled Fay and other liberal imperialists. He was primarily concerned with the consequences of territorial losses on Britain's economy and status. Or, as Keynes mused, British policy needed to prevent the United States from picking "out the eyes of the British Empire."³⁴ Many members of the British political and intellectual elite contended that the most expedient method to resolve the dilemma of Newfoundland was to promote the scheme of the island's federation with neighboring Canada. Keynes, for one, hoped that the mineral resources and strategic location of Labrador would be adequate to entice the Canadians into such an arrangement.³⁵ In 1948, after 14 years of rule by the commission, Newfoundlanders participated in two referenda to decide the fate of their country. The result was a narrow victory for

29 C.R. Fay, *Imperial Economy and its Place in the Formation of Economic Doctrine, 1600-1932* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934).

30 *Montreal Gazette*, 6 October 1934.

31 Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset* (Toronto: Pearson Longman, 2007), 196. See also Muriel E. Chamberlain, *European Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (London: Longman, 1998); John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-war World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988); and David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century* (London: Longman, 1991).

32 In 1907 the British Parliament created the Department of Dominions, and self-governing colonies within the empire were granted the right to conduct international negotiations independent of the British Embassy. However, as William Gilmore argues, this did not imply a "complete abrogation" of imperial control. At the outbreak of the Great War, the "position of the Dominions was one of clear subordination." Not until 1926 were the dominions granted real autonomy from imperial control. See William Gilmore, *Newfoundland and Dominion Status: The External Affairs Competence and International Law Status of Newfoundland, 1855-1934* (Toronto: Carswell, 1988), 40-4, 230-40.

33 Gene Long, *Suspended State: Newfoundland before Canada* (St. John's, NL: Breakwater Books, 1999), 154.

34 Niall Fergusson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 294.

35 Phillip McCann, "British Policy and Confederation," *Newfoundland Studies* 14, no. 2 (1998): 161.

Confederation and, on 31 March 1949, Newfoundland became Canada's tenth province.

For a British intellectual of his era, Fay's earlier scholarship suggests an unusual awareness of Newfoundland's historic place within the empire. More importantly, he was cognizant of the enormous economic and strategic potential of the island. His familiarity with the Newfoundland economy derived from his association with Harold Innis, whose influential *The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy* had been published in 1940.³⁶ The volume was emblematic of Innis's scholarship: well researched and flowing with analysis. However, the great span of the project, which covered six regions from 1497 to 1938, coupled with Innis's cumbersome writing style, disappointed Fay, who desired something on the "living side of economics." He wanted a prose through which the reader could "smell the fish, hear the fishermen and get their feet wet."³⁷ Fay was not alone in his disappointment. "What you did get from Innis was an exercise in endurance and a challenge to find out for yourself what it all meant," the Minnesota economist Herbert Heaton wrote to Fay. "Good exercise indeed, but you emerged exhausted and a little angry at having had to do the chore." Innis's lack of expression exemplified Fay's earlier lament on the strict focus of economic historians on commodities, and his reaction evoked Alfred Marshall's belief in the importance of making economics accessible to the layperson. Like his erstwhile colleague at Toronto, Donald Creighton, who believed history to be a drama and the historian the storyteller, Fay would have preferred a history that "exhibited men with souls and not merely as units in the pressure of things."³⁸

While Innis's erudition was unquestionably the catalyst for Fay's inquisitiveness regarding Newfoundland, in 1950 he had a chance encounter with the British Labour MP Herbert John Harvey Parker, who had published a book entitled *Newfoundland: 10th Province of Canada*.³⁹ Parker had gained his knowledge of Newfoundland by serving as parliamentary under-secretary of state for dominion affairs in 1945. He wrote to Fay from Westminster to lament that "since confederation, everyone here seems to

36 Harold Innis, *The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1940).

37 Herbert Heaton to Fay, 1 April 1949, CRFP, D/1571/2/2, PRONI. Those familiar with Fay's work will find his negative assessment of Innis's writing somewhat ironic. However, many others agreed with Fay's assessment. See Arthur R.M. Lower, *My First Seventy-Five Years* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1967), 302; C.P. Stacey, *A Date with History: Memoirs of a Canadian Historian* (Toronto: Deneau, 1982), 202-3; and Judith Stamps, *Unthinking Modernity: Innis, McLuhan, and the Frankfort School* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 91.

38 C.R. Fay, "The Toronto School of Economic History," *Economic History* 3 (January 1934): 169. In an interesting article on the career of R.H. Tawney, William H. Nelson wrote that Tawney belonged to "the little group, which also includes, among others, J.L. and Barbara Hammond, C.R. Fay, Gilbert Slater, and G.D.H. Cole, whose achievement it has been to alter decisively the conventional view of English history by describing the affairs of the peasants and workers who had been largely excluded from earlier histories." See W.H. Nelson, "R.H. Tawney," in *Some Modern Historians of Britain: Essays in Honor of R.L. Schuyler*, ed. Herman Ausubel, J. Bartlet Brebner, and Erling M. Hunt (New York: Dryden Press, 1951), 327.

39 Herbert John Harvey Parker was a long-time British Labour MP. He was educated at St. John's College, Oxford, where he was chair of the Oxford University Labour Club. He represented the constituency of Romford in Essex from 1935 until 1945 and Dagenham from 1945 to 1983. Parker wrote numerous books, including *Newfoundland: 10th Province of Canada* (London: Lincoln-Prager, 1950).

have lost interest in Newfoundland now that we no longer have any responsibility for its future.”⁴⁰ This neglectful attitude contrasted starkly with Fay’s conviction that imperial trade and general interests of the dominions depended greatly on the “understanding by one country, of the commercial wants of the other.”⁴¹ The empire had to be inspected from assorted angles, and Fay was determined to study Newfoundland through Newfoundland “spectacles.” He was further encouraged by Herbert R. Kemp, another former colleague at the University of Toronto, and a trade policy advisor at the Canadian Department of Trade and Commerce.⁴² Kemp was privy to a number of important documents, and also provided Fay with contacts in both Ottawa and Newfoundland. One of these was Raymond Gushue, president of Memorial University.

In 1950 a web of scholarly contacts wove its way throughout the empire, and Fay judiciously utilized his extensive inventory of acquaintances. Initially he intended merely to present just one lecture on the Newfoundland economy at the University of Toronto, but promptly conceived of more ambitious schemes. He posted letters of introduction, along with a copy of his book *Huskisson and his Age*, to politicians, bureaucrats, and businessmen (with each contact unearthing another).⁴³ The response to these inquiries varied. The poet E.J. Pratt wrote that he could offer no assistance as he had been away from the island for 40 years, but suggested that Fay contact his brother Calvert, who during the Confederation debates had been a supporter of Joseph R. Smallwood’s Newfoundland Confederate Association. Similarly, Eric Bowring offered little direct support but did provide a number of contacts in Liverpool. Robert Brown Job, a fellow alumnus of Fay’s public school who had served in Newfoundland’s National Convention, offered Fay access to the records of Job Brothers, while a former student, Gilbert Jackson, at the Bank of Nova Scotia in Toronto, claimed that his institution had a vast depository of Newfoundland documents.⁴⁴

Fay’s desire to research Newfoundland’s economic and social history coincided with an attempt by the Newfoundland scholarly community to generate a renewed interest in the province’s past and a reinterpretation of its historical narrative. In 1949, Memorial University College was granted full university status and an effort was initiated to advance academic standards and improve faculty qualifications. Memorial’s principal historian, Allan MacPherson Fraser, was an Edinburgh graduate who sat on the Royal Institute of International Affairs’s committee on Newfoundland and had contributed a number of scholarly pieces on Newfoundland’s history.⁴⁵ In 1952, however, he was

40 John Parker to Fay, 5 February 1951, CRFP, D/1571/6/8, PRONI.

41 Fay, “How Education Strengthens the Empire,” 260.

42 Kemp was trade policy advisor in the Department of Trade and Commerce from 1945 to 1959. He was also a member of the Ceylon Merchants Shipping Commission from 1957 to 1959. It was Kemp who wrote the obituary of C.R. Fay in the *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 28 (August 1962): 432-3.

43 C.R. Fay, *Huskisson and His Age* (London: Longmans Green, 1951).

44 Gilbert Edward Jackson was educated at St. John’s College, Cambridge. He joined the staff of the Department of Political Economy at the University of Toronto in 1911 and remained there until 1935, when he joined the Bank of England as an advisor. See Gilbert E. Jackson to Fay, 1 August 1952, CRFP, D/1571/6/8, PRONI.

45 See A.M. Fraser, “Fishery Negotiations with the United States,” in *Newfoundland Economic, Diplomatic and Strategic Studies*, ed. R.A. MacKay (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1946), 333-410; Fraser, “Sir George Calvert,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography (DCB)* I (Toronto: University

compelled by the university to move to New York and study for a PhD lest he be downgraded in rank to "Acting Professor."⁴⁶ In MacPherson's absence, President Raymond Gushue was pleased that the Cambridge-educated Fay was willing to take up a study of the island and anticipated that the economist's work would "open up avenues of research" in which the university could "play a leading part."⁴⁷

There was also by 1952 a palpable desire within Newfoundland scholarly circles to cultivate new avenues of research and move away from the nationalist historiography of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Resident intellectuals, such as Daniel Woodley Prowse,⁴⁸ had acknowledged the "historic misfortune" of the colony but were confident in a "new age of civilization and prosperity."⁴⁹ Prowse's 1895 epic – *A History of Newfoundland from the English, Colonial, and Foreign Records* – offered a Whig interpretation that championed Newfoundland's triumph over the repressive control of British interests and argued that English historians had ignored the part that Newfoundland played in the making of England.⁵⁰ There had been few Newfoundlanders since Prowse, though, to study the island's history. Indeed, as Keith Matthews later argued, despite the onset of professional history between the two world wars few students had delved into the realm of Newfoundland history. Those who did "were not Newfoundlanders" and, surprisingly, none challenged the dominant group conflict theory put forward by Prowse that Newfoundland's development was hindered due to conflict between settlers and migratory fishermen.⁵¹

The dominance of Prowse's narrative created what Jerry Bannister called "romantic myths rooted in an interpretation of Newfoundlanders as victims."⁵² By the end of the Second World War, however, academics were increasingly concerned with the realities of contemporary Newfoundland, and in 1946 a collection of papers edited by the Dalhousie University political scientist R.A. MacKay was published entitled

of Toronto Press, 1966), 162-3; Fraser (ed.), *The Newfoundland Industrial Development Board and its Work, 1942-1949* (St. Johns, NL: Robinson & Co, 1950); and Fraser, "The Nineteenth-Century Negotiations for Confederation of Newfoundland with Canada," *Canadian Historical Association Annual Report* (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Historical Association, 1949), 14-21.

46 Peter Neary and Melvin Baker, "Allan M. Fraser's 'History of the Participation of Newfoundland in the Second World War'," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 102, no. 4 (2010): 12-15, 40-5. On a number of occasions, Fraser made copies of texts and treaties that Fay required and posted them to Belfast.

47 Raymond Gushue to Fay, 8 September 1952, CRFP, D/1571/2/6, PRONI. Gushue was educated at Dalhousie University, and practiced law until his appointment as chairman of the Newfoundland Fisheries Board in 1936. He was president of the Memorial University of Newfoundland from 1952 to 1966.

48 On Daniel Woodley Prowse, see George Story, "Daniel W. Prowse, DCB XIV: 850-4; G.M Story, "Judge Prowse: historian and publicist," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 68 (1971-72): 19-25, as well as O'Flaherty, *The Rock Observed*, 79-81.

49 O'Flaherty, *The Rock Observed*, 49-81; John Fitzgerald, "Conflict and Culture in Irish-Newfoundland Roman Catholicism, 1829-1850" (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 1997), 6.

50 D.W. Prowse, *A History of Newfoundland from the English, Colonial, and Foreign Records* (London: Macmillan, 1895); Jerry Bannister, "Making History: Cultural Memory in Twentieth-Century Newfoundland," *Newfoundland Studies* 18, no. 2 (2002): 176-8.

51 Matthews, "Historical Fence Building," 147.

52 Jerry Bannister, "The Politics of Cultural Memory: Themes in the History of Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada, 1972-2003," in *Collected Research Papers of the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada* (St. John's, NL: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2003), 145.

Newfoundland: Economic, Diplomatic and Strategic Studies. This important book represented a contemporary perspective on the island's economic problems and pointed to the union with Canada as a potential resolution. Although its intent was to "interpret Newfoundland to other than Newfoundland peoples," it did not, according to reviewers, sufficiently engage with the early history of the island. Contemplating the volume's last chapter, Fay's colleague at Cambridge, E.E. Rich, wrote: "It might well have been called 'Return to Atlantic Bastion' instead of 'Transition to Atlantic Bastion.' For the flank position of Newfoundland, to the north of the Atlantic routes, is old, not new."⁵³

Fay was interested in these "old narratives" that would help illuminate Newfoundland's place within the new empire. As a liberal imperialist he had little interest in Prowse or the concept of "group conflict." When discussing Newfoundland's transition from "fishery to colony," Fay simply evoked Innis's study and conceded that Newfoundlanders had to fight "not merely for justice, but to exist at all." He also paid scant attention to the work of Agnes Field, A.H. McClintock, or C.B. Judah, and was instead concerned primarily with strengthening the ties of empire and highlighting the historic trans-Atlantic commercial relationships.⁵⁴ More important, as an advocate of Canadian federation, he wanted to illuminate the emerging links between Newfoundland and Canada and expound the mutual benefits of Confederation.

Fay had two methods of research. His first was archival. In this respect Fay was a pioneer, and his efforts inspired Newfoundland intellectuals to collect and preserve historic documents. While at Toronto Fay lamented the scant attention paid by Canadian historians to the primary sources stored in the depositories of the United Kingdom. When he arrived in Newfoundland, however, he was "disappointed by the prospects for research" and found few records "which had not been burnt."⁵⁵ The aspiration to pursue Newfoundland's historic documents from depositories on the island and in England resonated especially with two Newfoundland postgraduate students at Oxford, George Story and Cyril Fox. After meeting Fay, Story, studying on a Rhodes scholarship at Oriel College, wrote to Gushue that the "wealth of Newfoundland documents in England" was tantalizing. He had frequently come across them during the previous two years while searching libraries in connection with his work on the 16th and 17th centuries, and lamented that he was not "engaged in research on Newfoundland history."⁵⁶ Story suggested that Memorial send "a team

53 E.E. Rich, review of R.A. MacKay, *Newfoundland: Economic, Diplomatic and Strategic Studies*, *The English Historical Review* 64, no. 251 (April 1949): 254-5.

54 Field rejected Prowse's theory of straightforward conflict between migratory fishermen and settlers, and replaced it with the hypothesis that conflict existed primarily between two English commercial groups: the West England "fishing merchants" and the London "sack ship merchants." C.B. Judah accepted Field's theory, while McClintock reverted back to Prowse's original premise of conflict between settlers and the imperial government. See Matthews, "Historical Fence Building," 147-51. See also Agnes M. Field, "The Development of Government in Newfoundland, 1638-1713" (M.A. thesis, University of London, 1924); A.H. McClintock, *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland, 1783-1832: A Study of Retarded Colonisation* (London: Longmans, Green, 1941); and C.B. Judah, *The North American Fisheries and British Policy to 1713* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1933).

55 *The Daily News*, 5 November 1953.

56 George Story to Raymond Gushue, 27 January 1953, CRFP, D/1571/2/6, PRONI.

of researchers" to England to engage solely in transcribing and microfilming the documents in order to "to salvage something from the inevitable destruction of another war."⁵⁷ Cyril Fox, at Merton College studying under K.C. Wheare (a former constitutional advisor to the Newfoundland National Convention), also searched for materials in English depositories, made copies of pertinent documents, and sent them to Fay.

The professor's second method of investigation was peripatetic. Emulating Harold Innis's ramblings in Newfoundland some years before, Fay was determined to traverse the province to gain insight into its geography and climate. While Innis had spent his time in the vicinity of St. John's, Fay wanted to explore the outports and some parts of the interior. This would serve, he mused, to avoid the glaring blunders of a narration written merely from a study of the literature and statistics.⁵⁸ In the summer of 1952, armed with a \$325.00 grant from the Canadian Social Science Research Council, he embarked on a month-long tour of Newfoundland and Labrador under the auspices, so the *Evening Telegram* reported, of President Raymond Gushue of Memorial.⁵⁹ So that he could employ a method made more famous by the politicking Jack Pickersgill a few years later, the government provided Fay with a coastal steamer that allowed him to inspect the outports at his leisure.⁶⁰ Under the stewardship of a fisheries officer, G.F. Collins of Trinity Bay, a veteran sailor with 44 years experience on the water, the vessel carried Fay from St. John's to Bonavista and then to Twillingate.⁶¹ And after a subsequent inspection of the pulp and paper mill at Grand Falls, Fay sailed for Quirpon on the northern tip of the great northern peninsula and then to the historic fishing station of Battle Harbour, Labrador, before a final stopover in Corner Brook.⁶²

Fay had an assortment of government and business contacts. A.W. Southam, the general manager of the British Newfoundland Development Corporation, and Fay's former student, provided a letter of introduction, as did Raymond Gushue, so that he could closely inspect budding economic enterprises such as Bowater's Newfoundland

57 See George Story, "Newfoundland Dialect: An Historical View," *Canadian Geographical Journal* 74, no. 4 (1965): 19-24; Story, "Judge Prowse (1834-1914)," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (1971): 15-25; Story, "Old Labrador: George Cartwright, 1738-1819," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 77, no. 1 (1981): 23-31; Story, *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982); and Story, "'A tune beyond us are we': Reflections of Newfoundland Community Song and Ballad," *Newfoundland Studies* 4, no. 2 (1988): 129-44. For a summary of Story's scholarship see William J. Kirwin, "George M. Story (1927-1994)," *Acadiensis* XXIV, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 3-4, and Robert Paine, "'A Word in Your Ear': An Appreciation of G.M. Story (1927-94) – Friend, Scholar, Newfoundlander," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 10, no. 2 (1994): 165-79.

58 Fay had used the same tactics in his studies of cooperation in 1908. See Fay, *Co-operation at Home and Abroad*, vii.

59 *The Evening Telegram*, 28 June 1952.

60 Pickersgill's use of a coastal steamer for politicking is well known. See, for instance, Gary L. Saunders, *Doctor Olds of Twillingate: Portrait of an American Surgeon in Newfoundland* (St. John's, NL: Breakwater Books, 1994), 177.

61 G.F. Collins began fishing at the age of twelve, carrying out his trade along the Labrador coast. He spent three years aboard trawlers out of Boston, fishing Georges Bank, before joining the Royal Navy during the Great War. From 1940, Collins worked as a fisheries officer with the Newfoundland fisheries board. See "Notes," CRFP, D/1571/11, PRONI.

62 Travel Itinerary, CRFP, June 1953, D/1571/6/8, PRONI.

Pulp and Paper Mills Limited in Corner Brook, where he was offered unfettered access to the operation. He was also introduced to a range of local personalities, many of whom Fay reminisced about for years afterward. In Nipper's Harbour, one of the most important settlements in Green Bay and the region's informal capital, he spent the afternoon with the elderly Samuel Blackler, the proprietor of S.J. Blackler Limited, which had carried on business as general merchants and fish exporters; at Lewisport he lunched with the artist Ted Drover. While in Corner Brook *The Western Star* approached him to write a monthly column entitled "London Letter," a proposition that he seriously considered before declining.⁶³ He received requests from institutions in St. John's to research their Newfoundland histories, including one from the St. John's Chamber of Commerce that asked him to "dig into the past and tell something of the story of the organization."⁶⁴ Throughout the excursion, Fay also sought to investigate social problems accrued during periods of industrialization. He even tried to convince the Bank of Montreal to open a branch at the northern community of St. Anthony, but was told that it was not economically viable.⁶⁵

Fay's tour of Newfoundland came at an opportune time for the provincial government. In a manifesto written shortly after Confederation, Joseph Smallwood spoke of identifying Newfoundland's natural resources and "advertising them to the world." Moreover, Smallwood proclaimed "every bit of our strength and energy as a government" would go into developing natural resources.⁶⁶ This determination, fostered by elite figures such as Gushue, captivated Fay, who told the *Evening Telegram* that the industrial boom in Newfoundland was "one of the most interesting developments in world history today, comparing it with Great Britain's industrial revolution of 200 years ago."⁶⁷ It was of no surprise, then, that Fay's first public lecture on Newfoundland was not on the province's economic history, but dealt rather with "Newfoundland and the Labrador Potential." In this address to the Canadian Political Science Association at the University of Western Ontario, Fay proved eager to illustrate the province's commercial potential to Canada and the rest of the empire. He delineated aspects of Labrador's history but drew heavily, as his title suggests, on the potential benefits that Labrador offered to the country. Awash in the rhetoric of Smallwood himself, Fay observed that industrialization in Labrador was "proceeding apace" and that the new Labrador would be a "field of industrial relations" employing the resources of modern engineering." Employing language that might have been plucked from one of Smallwood's political speeches, Fay finished by arguing that the great industrialization would not have been possible but for Confederation. There "will be no more wrangling over boundaries," Fay asserted, as "Newfoundland and Labrador was safely in the hands of Canada." He also took a shot at the anti-confederates who had championed economic relations with the United States: "It is difficult to see how chaos could have been avoided, if the sovereignty had remained

63 K.H. Pritchard to Fay, 28 July 1952, CRFP, D/1571/11/1, PRONI.

64 H.T. Renouf to Fay, 2 September 1952, CRFP, D/1571/2/6, PRONI.

65 Chairman of the Bank of Montreal to Fay, 27 July 1953, CRFP, D/1571/2/6, PRONI.

66 Joseph Smallwood, *I Chose Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973), 343-4.

67 *The Evening Telegram*, 28 June 1952. See also Gerhard P. Bassler, "'Develop or Perish': Joseph R. Smallwood and Newfoundland's Quest for German Industry, 1949-1953," *Acadiensis* XV, no. 2 (Spring 1986): 117.

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in St. John's, while the finance came from the metropolitan centers of Britain, Canada or the United States." According to Fay, this consideration by itself, "amply justified the entry of Newfoundland into Canada in 1949."⁶⁸

Fay's lecture on Labrador's potential was published in the *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* in 1953. Shortly thereafter, he was asked to write an article for *The Commerce Journal* at the University of Toronto on "The Importance of the Fisheries in Modern Newfoundland." Fay obtained volumes of statistical data from Hubert R. Kemp, a senior Ottawa civil servant, that expounded the economic benefits of Confederation. Kemp also provided materials relating to the Canadian National Railway and recommended that railway development be treated under the heading "Economic Consequences in Relation to the Opening of the Island" in order to highlight the vastly increased Newfoundland rail traffic that followed Confederation.⁶⁹ At one point, Fay asked to view documents relating to discussions of Newfoundland's possible entry into Confederation, but Kemp was not at liberty to go into this material.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the scope of Fay's project and his interest in Newfoundland had widened greatly.⁷¹

Examining the relationship between Joseph Smallwood and the author Farley Mowat, James Overton has noted that, in the second half of the 1960s, Mowat taught Newfoundlanders that they were "worth writing about" and sparked a cultural revival.⁷² Yet, a decade earlier, in the autumn of 1953, C.R. Fay, espousing similar sentiments, was building the foundation of that restoration. His lectures, 12 in all, not only generated local interest but also, as Melvin Baker has argued, highlighted Memorial's newly found commitment to local research.⁷³ "Since Memorial attained the status of a university," proclaimed Vice-President Alfred C. Hunter, the school "hoped to act as a host to a distinguished scholar and felt that everyone would agree that the choice of Dr. Fay as guest lecturer was a wonderful choice."⁷⁴ More than that, however, Fay challenged academics in the province to preserve their records and "get the story of this part of our history written down." The narratives would be so compelling, he exclaimed, "that if it is not done here it will be done by another country and Newfoundlanders will be buying the epic of the seal fishery in a cheap best seller, published in New York."⁷⁵ Echoing the views of Gushue at Memorial, Fay stressed the need for Newfoundlanders to assume

68 C.R. Fay, "Newfoundland and the Labrador Potential," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 19 (November 1953): 457.

69 J.A. MacDonald to Hubert R. Kemp (copy), 6 February 1953, CRFP, D/1571/11/1, PRONI.

70 Hubert Kemp to Fay, 27 January 1953, CRFP, D/1571/11/1, PRONI.

71 In 1953 Fay took an extended visit to Labrador. At the Moravian mission in Nain he lodged with the mission's director, Rev. F.W. Peacock, and observed his interaction with Native communities. He also took stock of the mission's vast inventory of documents. When he returned to the United Kingdom, Fay spent considerable time searching for records relating to the mission. He unearthed various important documents, including W.W. Perrett's "station and annual reports from Hopedale, 1927 to 1928." See "Transcripts relating to the Moravian Mission to Labrador," CRFP, D/1571/11, PRONI.

72 Overton, "Sparking a Cultural Revolution," 168.

73 Melvin Baker, "Memorial University's Role in the Establishment of a Provincial Archives for Newfoundland in 1960," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 9, no. 1 (1993): 85.

74 *The Daily News*, 17 November 1953.

75 *The Daily News*, 15 October 1953.

intellectual control of their past. He treated his audiences to interpretive excerpts from their history and by implication held out both intellectual and economic prospects for the future. For example, in one lecture he spoke at length on the great commercial promise of Grand Falls and Corner Brook while reiterating his views on the Labrador potential.⁷⁶ The Fay lectures would have been acclaimed as a success had the professor concluded his Anglo Canadian research simply with a call for Newfoundlanders to assume intellectual ownership of their history. But the political nature of his project, and his own proclivities, began increasingly to leech into the public forum. In his penultimate talk, Fay spoke about the Irish Catholic populace of the island. This was a surprising choice, not least because Fay's previous publications had betrayed negative and paternalistic attitudes toward Irish Catholics. For example, in *Life and Labour in the Nineteenth Century*, he summarized the differences in Ireland between the Protestant north and the Catholic south in the following manner: "Protestant Ulster, stubborn and hard-working, was laying the foundations of her industrial prosperity, but very different was the state of the great Catholic mass of this emotional and imaginative race."⁷⁷ That a respected Cambridge don would describe an entire people as "emotional" highlights a trans-Atlantic intellectual milieu that harboured perceptions of the Irish Catholic as priest-ridden, scheming, and superstitious. As Donald Akenson has illustrated, until the 1970s not a single major scholarly study was published on the Irish contribution to Canada and consequently, stereotypes and half-truths about Irish Catholics went uncontested. As late as 1960, for example, the prominent Canadian social historian H. Clare Pentland coarsely described the 19th-century Irish Catholic in Ontario as a "primitive man, half tribesman still."⁷⁸

Moreover, by the 1950s Fay had moved from Cambridge to Northern Ireland to reside with his son, who was employed as an instructor at a prominent boys' school (the Royal Belfast Academical Institution). In a society in which many of the "old certainties of the Orange State remained intact," Fay's Belfast experience fostered religious prejudice.⁷⁹ In the sanctuary of the common room at Queen's University, in his view the only "civilized spot on that side of the Irish Sea," he comfortably integrated into Unionist society.⁸⁰ While in Belfast Fay also diagnosed important economic differences between British Ulster and the Irish Republic: primarily that Northern Ireland's economic fortunes were attributed to its freedom from the hegemonic and intrusive Catholicism that was widespread in the south. Captivated by these differences, in 1952 he wrote frankly in the *Canadian Forum* that it was "far more likely that Canada will unite with Washington than Ulster will re-partition itself into Eire."⁸¹

This intellectual and religious prejudice had an enormous effect on Fay's research, and especially on his perception of Newfoundland's history. He made no bones about the thrust of his research, but his endorsement of an exclusively British-Protestant narrative effortlessly converted into a brightly promising Canadian future stood in

76 *The Daily News*, 22 October 1953.

77 Fay, *Life and Labour in the Nineteenth Century*, 119.

78 Donald Akenson, *Being Had: Historians, Evidence and the Irish in North America* (Port Credit, ON: P.D. Meany Publishers, 1985), 123.

79 Jonathan Tonge, *Northern Ireland: Conflict and Change* (London: Longman, 2002), 34.

80 Herbert Heaton to Fay, 5 October, 1958, CRFP, D/1571/6/10, PRONI.

81 C.R. Fay, "A Return Visit," *The Canadian Forum* 33 (April 1952).

stark contrast to realities of the portion of the island that was Irish Catholic or anti-Confederate. Fay's research notes offer no indication that he considered the cultural and economic significance of the numerous Irish migrants from Waterford, Kilkenny, and Wexford who arrived in Newfoundland in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The historical records in Newfoundland, despite the St. John's fires, were singularly rich, Fay asserted, primarily because of the "ancient contacts with London and the West Country."⁸² Although he did visit some communities along the shores of the Irish-dominated Avalon Peninsula, the overwhelming amount of his time on the island was spent within the Protestant outports of the more northerly coastline. Consequently, Fay's Newfoundland experience was largely divorced from any Irish contact and his work assumed Newfoundland to be an English colony full of English people.

In his lecture on the "Irish Catholic Priesthood in St. John's," Fay's assertions were harsh and direct. The Irish, he claimed, were "a problem from the start." Servants to masters of a different creed, the Hibernians – through, of course, no fault of their own – were a "menace to the peace and health of St. John's." He cited the case of one Englishman in Pearce's Harbour near Twillingate, who was so happy that his Irish Catholic neighbor had moved to the Canadian mainland that "he climbed a hill where he could be all alone and shout "to hell with the pope." He was, as Fay pointed out, ecstatic to be "paddy Free."⁸³ Fay's treatment of Irish Catholics in Newfoundland, based primarily on correspondence that he unearthed in the Colonial Office archives and on interviews he personally conducted in Twillingate, angered much of his St. John's audience, and not least a number of Roman Catholic sisters who attended the lecture.

Fay appears to have had no inkling of the institutionalized sectarianism that characterized Newfoundland society during this period. Nor was he conscious of the great pains that Memorial had taken to ensure Roman Catholic representation in the field of history.⁸⁴ The following morning a brusque letter arrived at his hotel from Brother J.P. Keane of St. Bonaventure's College, chastising him for insulting the heritage and religious convictions of a large segment of the audience. "Did you realize or care," Keane asked, "that the majority of your audience was Irish and Catholic?" Turning to Fay's highlighting of a comment by the English naturalist Philip Gosse's comment on Newfoundland – "I see little in it except dogs and Irishmen" – Keane took him to task:

Your comment on the presence of "many dogs and Irishmen" in the island at the turn of the last century deserves more notice. Surely as a historian of repute you could have explained the presence of the Irish in terms of the unjust code of English penal laws. As a Newfoundlander I can explain that dogs were, and still are, a necessity in many poor homes when they are used in gathering

82 Fay, "Newfoundland and the Labrador Potential," 456.

83 C.R. Fay, "The Irish and Catholic Priesthood" (a lecture delivered at Memorial University, 11 November 1953), CRFP, PRONI.

84 The appointment of A.M. Fraser to his position as professor of history at Memorial was made partly because of his adherence to Roman Catholicism. See Malcolm MacLeod, *A Bridge Built Halfway: A History of Memorial University College, 1925-1950* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 89.

wood for fuel and for hunting game. The clever innuendo which coupled “dogs and Irishmen” betrays an ignorance of the way of life of our people, which is inexcusable only in one who has little sympathy for us. It would have been so much more enlightening and uplifting if the dog population of the period had been ignored, and the name of a famous Irishman, James MacBraire had been linked with the co-founders of the Benevolent Irish society which has flourished since 1806.⁸⁵

Fay responded with an apology “for his shortcomings,” and at the conclusion of his final lecture he spoke for a few moments on the significance of the Benevolent Irish Society. But the damage could not be undone.⁸⁶ Apparently oblivious to his own foibles, Fay was taken aback at Keane’s reprimand and mildly embarrassed, particularly when the priest complained to President Gushue that Memorial was a non-sectarian university and that Fay’s lectures ought to reflect that reality. Fay’s glaring neglect of positive Irish contributions to Newfoundland and the blatant stereotypes that he attached to the community are noteworthy. So too, however, is his genuine surprise that these perceptions, widely held within British and Canadian academia, could be deemed offensive. Indeed, the lecture on the Irish in Newfoundland did more than underline Fay’s own personal preconceptions. Considering that he intended to familiarize the wider empire with Newfoundland’s narrative, the omission of the Irish community from the scope of his research is a compelling example of the nature of a contested past. It is also interesting that his research, encouraged both by Memorial and by such a notable Ottawa bureaucrat as Kemp, reached such contentious conclusions. That Newfoundland was perceived as a British – read “English” – island was reiterated by Sidney Smith, the Nova Scotian-born president of the University of Toronto and future minister in the Diefenbaker cabinet, who described Fay’s Newfoundland inquiries as a program of “Anglo-Canadian research.”⁸⁷ Fay’s findings are representative of what John Fitzgerald has called the “myth of British Union,” which became a dominant ethos in the official culture of the island and remained so well into the latter stages of the 20th century.⁸⁸

Fay also had little appreciation of the religious undertones present in the Confederation debates. The question of union with Canada was fiercely contested, and all sides employed sectarian acrimony as a device to persuade the undecided.⁸⁹ The public rebuff to Confederation by the St. John’s Roman Catholic archbishop, Edward P. Roche, allowed pro-confederates in the overwhelmingly Protestant outports to decry opposition to Canada as a “popish plot”; despite the fact that several

85 Brother J.P. Keane to Fay, 12 November 1953, CRFP, D/1571/2/6, PRONI.

86 *The Daily News*, 17 November 1953.

87 Sidney Smith to Fay, 1 August 1952, CRFP, D/1571/6/8, PRONI.

88 John Fitzgerald, review of Raymond B. Blake, *Canadians at Last: Canada Integrates Newfoundland as a Province*, *Newfoundland Studies* 11, no. 1 (1995): 139.

89 See John Fitzgerald, “The True Father of Confederation? Archbishop E.P. Roche, Term 17, and Newfoundland’s Confederation with Canada,” *Newfoundland Studies* 14, no. 2 (1998): 188-219; Peter Neary, “Newfoundland’s Union with Canada, 1949: Conspiracy or Choice?” *Acadiensis* XII, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 110-19; and Jeff Webb, “Confederation, Conspiracy and Choice: A Discussion,” *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 14, no. 2 (1998): 169-87.

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prominent Catholics supported Confederation, Archbishop Roche's objections also allowed pro-confederates to claim "a vote for Responsible Government was a vote for the Catholic Church."⁹⁰ That the anti-Confederation movement had an Irish flavour is partially explained by Jeff Webb, who has argued that union with Canada "carried the same connotations as had Home Rule for their relatives in Ireland."⁹¹ The triumph of Smallwood and his confederates in 1949 solidified the myth of "British Union." As one historian noted, "even unofficially, Anglophilia became official."⁹²

In this environment, Fay's Cambridge extraction, his program of Anglo Canadian research, and the attention of Canadian civil servants such as Kemp made him a compelling and yet contentious figure in ways that he himself was ill-equipped to understand. Fay's contempt for Newfoundland anti-confederates was palpable. "There are those who feel that as an independent self-governing colony Newfoundland could have done best for itself," Fay stated in his lecture on the modern fishery. "I do not agree. It is certain that only under the aegis of a Dominion can the asset of the North Atlantic Fisheries be turned to full account."⁹³ That the opposition to the desirability of a Canadian future could plausibly be seen as coming chiefly from an Irish Catholic element made his intellectual position all the easier to maintain. Irish Catholics on the island did not fit into either the Anglo Canadian history engendered by his Oxbridge, Toronto, and Belfast perspective or his brand of liberal imperialism so they were written out of the narrative.⁹⁴

Fay's search for documents relating to Newfoundland history had a similar orientation. Although he is significant as a miner and collector of Newfoundland materials in the United Kingdom, his selection of items was characterized by his particular perspective on the Newfoundland narrative. In other words, he focused primarily on English depositories. During his period of collection he was considered by many to be the leading scholar in the field, and he earned the nickname the "academic high priest of Newfoundland." He frequently took commissions from enthusiastic institutions to look for archival materials in England relating to their respective interests. And Fay's search for Newfoundland material – often funded by Memorial University – took him to Poole, Dartmouth, and the Channel Islands.⁹⁵ He formed a close and cordial relationship with the staff at the Dominion Archives of

90 John Fitzgerald, "Newfoundland Confederation Revisited: Three New Works," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 9, no.1 (Spring 1993): 117.

91 Webb, "Confederation, Conspiracy and Choice," 177.

92 Fitzgerald, "The Orthodoxy Unchallenged," 139.

93 C.R. Fay, "The Economy of the Modern Fishery" (unpublished lecture, 1953), CRFP, D/1571/9/3, PRONI.

94 There are various examples of similar treatment of the Irish population of Newfoundland. For example, in his book *Newfoundland: The Road to Confederation*, William Eggleston writes of the CCF leader, M.J. Coldwell, who said on the floor of the House of Commons in 1949 that Newfoundland's people descended from places like "Bristol, Bideford, Plymouth, fishing villages along the Devon and Cornish coasts and from places on the shores of Brittany, Normandy and Scotland." Eggleston goes on to ask: "So Hansard quotes him, but did he not also add Ireland?" See Eggleston, *Newfoundland: The Road to Confederation* (Ottawa, ON: Information Canada, 1974), 115.

95 R.C. Jarvis to Fay, 8 September 1952, CRFP, D/1571/6/8, PRONI. Memorial would regularly cover Fay's hotel expenses when he was copying papers relating to the history of Newfoundland.

Canada and a personal rapport with its chief archivist, William Kaye Lamb.⁹⁶ Lamb was keen to assemble a depository of information on Newfoundland within his “total archive” approach: “Newfoundland and Labrador seem to be filled with good things, and we must see what can be done about collecting and preserving them.”⁹⁷

The relationship between Fay and Lamb had long-term benefits not only for the Dominion Archives (later the National Archives) in Ottawa, but also for Memorial University and for the Gosling Library in St. John’s. Fay scouted for material in the United Kingdom, which he would then acquire on microfilm. One such trip to Poole resulted in the securing of materials from the Lester-Garland family papers. The collection included a letter book of Francis Lester (a merchant of Poole, 1720-1727); copies of a diary written by Benjamin Lester in Trinity, Newfoundland, in 1762 and 1763; and the diaries of Isaac Lester (another merchant of Poole). Also acquired was the personal and business book of John Bingley Garland, first speaker of the Newfoundland House of Assembly. Fay and Lamb also managed to secure access to the letter book of Sir Joseph Banks, the English naturalist and botanist who had visited Newfoundland in 1766. His journal, discovered in the public library in Adelaide, Australia, was microfilmed and sent to Ottawa and St. John’s. There were also abundant materials on the Labrador trade, and when Lamb learned that Fay was interested in the records of the Moravian mission in Labrador, the archivist could barely contain himself. “The Moravian Mission records,” wrote Lamb, “make my mouth water. Do tell me more about them when you have a minute. Are they very voluminous, or would it be practical to copy them?”⁹⁸

The relationship between Fay and Lamb and their copious correspondence also embody conveniently the theme of this article. These men, each of whom had only a remote connection with Newfoundland, made strange ambassadors for the province. The fact that Fay, a British Protestant, was traveling through England searching for historical documents pertaining to Newfoundland, which were then archived and preserved by a British Columbian long established in Ottawa, says much about the post-Confederation politics of the island. It is also important to note that while Fay played a part in the emerging pursuit of academic history on the island, both he and Lamb retained a supercilious approach to the island’s history and a somewhat paternalistic attitude toward the province and its people. A picture of Fay in sealskin, for instance, drew a mocking letter from Lamb, which explained the amusement he got from viewing Fay in his “Newfoundland Costume.”⁹⁹

96 William Kaye Lamb earned a doctorate from the London School of Economics in 1933. He served as the provincial archivist and librarian of British Columbia (1934-40), university librarian of the University of British Columbia (1940-48), dominion archivist of Canada (1948-68), and national librarian of Canada (1953-67). See Wilfred I. Smith, “William Kaye Lamb,” *Archivaria*, 15 (Winter 1982-83): 9-15.

97 William K. Lamb to Fay, 14 September 1953, CRFP, D/1571/2/6, PRONI. On Lamb’s “total archive” approach, see Terry Cook, “An Archival Revolution: W. Kaye Lamb and the Transformation of the Archival Profession,” *Archivaria*, 15 (Winter 1982-83): 197-8.

98 Cook, “An Archival Revolution,” 197-8.

99 William K. Lamb to Fay, 21 January 1954, CRFP, D/1571/6/9, PRONI. The picture of Fay in the sealskin motivated Archibald Munn to write Fay about an interesting account told to him by William Whiteway after returning with a government delegation from London: “At a dinner one evening in the company of delegates from India and the Far East,” wrote Munn, one member of the House of

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In 1956, Fay published his lectures under the title, *Life and Labour in Newfoundland: Based on Lectures delivered at the Memorial University of Newfoundland*. Published in the United Kingdom by the Cambridge-based W. Heffer & Sons, the book found publication in Canada – by the University of Toronto Press – only after a difficult search. Poor sales of Fay's earlier *Huskisson and his Age* were partly to blame, but so was the perception that the current manuscript had a close association with the Newfoundland government. "This is an essential book for the island, and is a foundation document," Fay was informed by Lorne Pierce, editor of Ryerson Press, "but it is one that the government should underwrite, since you have been one of the principal benefactors."¹⁰⁰ Pierce also insisted that the Newfoundland government should have the book placed in all Newfoundland public and circulating libraries was no doubt commercially motivated; this deeply angered Fay, who rejected the insinuation that he was a mouthpiece for Newfoundland politicians.¹⁰¹ Although the manuscript is almost a precise copy of the lectures (with the addition of an Esso roadmap), Fay tactfully omitted the chapter on the Irish. After the book's eventual appearance, the reviewer in the *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* praised it as "a guide to a complete history of Newfoundland" and commended Fay for focusing on "underworked or even unknown, aspects of Newfoundland's history."¹⁰² Encouragement came also from as prominent a Newfoundlander as Premier Smallwood, who acquired a copy of the book and mailed it to Belfast to be signed.¹⁰³ Fay, in turn, followed up with two further, though smaller, publications on historical aspects of the province.¹⁰⁴

All of Fay's work on Newfoundland had shortcomings that were identified both by private assessors and public reviewers. By any reasonable historiographical standards, his studies were weak in analysis and lacked structural and thematic control. His manuscript on Labrador was rejected by Ryerson Press in 1960 because it had "no commercial possibilities." It was "a collection of incidents, impressions, and notes, rather than a coherent book," wrote John Webster Grant. "This does not diminish the value but it certainly limits the possibilities of sale."¹⁰⁵ Fay's writing style, especially at this late stage in his career, was erratic and often featured an assortment of quotations and source materials that could leave the reader disoriented.¹⁰⁶ Years before, his old friend Keynes

Lords approached Whiteway, and to the prime minister of Newfoundland's embarrassment, said: "Sir William I was hoping to see you in your native costume tonight." See Archie Munn to Fay, 16 December 1953, CRFP, D/1571/6/9, PRONI.

100 Lorne Pierce to Fay, 21 November 1953, CRFP, D/1571/2/, PRONI.

101 Lorne Pierce to Fay, 30 November 1953, CRFP, D/1571/2/6, PRONI.

102 J.H. Dales, review of C.R. Fay, *Life and Labour in Newfoundland: Based on Lectures Delivered at the Memorial University of Newfoundland*, *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 24, no. 3 (1958): 445.

103 A well-known bibliophile, Smallwood routinely sent Fay copies of books to be autographed. See Joseph R. Smallwood to Fay, 31 January 1958, CRFP, D/1571/6/10, PRONI.

104 C.R. Fay, "Note and Memoranda, Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820) and Newfoundland," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* XXI, no. 1 (February 1955): 73-6; C.R. Fay, *Tales of the Labrador* (Cambridge, UK: W. Heffer and Sons, 1960); C.R. Fay, *The Channel Islands and Newfoundland* (Cambridge, UK: W. Heffer and Sons, 1961).

105 John Webster Grant to Fay, 2 December 1960, CRFP, D/1571/11/3, PRONI.

106 Fay's book, *Huskisson and his Age* (published in 1951), did not sell well and consequently Longmans did not publish the second volume. See Longmans Publishing Company to Fay, 29 November 1954, CRFP, D.1571/6/9, PRONI.

had found this “immense disorder” to have “qualities of a work of art.”¹⁰⁷ E.R. Seary of Memorial, though, was not so forgiving as he suggested that Fay’s work on the Channel Islands was, for any historian, a “horrid warning of how not to write his own book.”¹⁰⁸

Yet Charles Ryle Fay’s contribution to Newfoundland studies went beyond just publishing a poorly written book at the end of a lengthy career. He was genuinely engaged, as Newfoundland’s deputy minister of education aptly pointed out, “in bringing back to life interesting aspects of Newfoundland history.”¹⁰⁹ He was a pioneer in the collection of Newfoundland archival materials in the United Kingdom and was personally responsible for disinterring many important documents. “There can be no islands in the British Commonwealth with such rich historical records as Newfoundland and the Channel Islands,” Fay once wrote, “but they require finding.” This pairing of the roles of historian and archivist was extended into the 1960s and beyond when Memorial recruited Keith Matthews to conduct research and “to be an archival collector as much as a teacher.”¹¹⁰ To be sure, despite his professedly idealistic intentions, Fay had little understanding either of Newfoundland’s institutionalized sectarianism or of his own social and religious prejudices. His indifference to key elements of Newfoundland’s history and historiography greatly limited the effectiveness of his work. Yet, as a purveyor of Newfoundland’s historical significance, Fay was influential in his day and his interest in relating Newfoundland’s British past to its Canadian future had a wide reach. Like many other historiographies, that of Newfoundland diversified during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and took directions that would consign Fay’s work to the oblivion that some had always thought it deserved.¹¹¹ Ultimately his direct contributions to Newfoundland history were minor, but his role remains historically and historiographically revealing in terms of the evolution of Newfoundland’s narrative and the contesting of its past.

107 Despite their often-complicated relationship, Keynes remained an admirer of Fay’s unorthodox writing style. Reviewing Fay’s *English Economic History Mainly since 1700*, Keynes considered the “work of art” to have one fault: “It is discursive in the extreme. There is a quantity of the latest undergrowth, bursting and fragrant with new leaves; delightful flowers spring at our feet; the birds above us sing the songs of a free and buoyant heart . . . [and] we are lead upon a path which visits the best viewpoints of the English landscape and the memorial of those who have gone before; but we may feel, all the same, if we are newcomers, that sometimes the path is more like a maze, and that the many allusions with which our guide enriches the talk as we accompany him are lost upon us in our ignorance.” See J.M. Keynes, review of C.R. Fay, *English Economic History Mainly Since 1700*, *The Economic Journal* 50, no. 198/199 (Jun-Sep. 1940): 259.

108 Ron Seary, review of C.R. Fay, *The Channel Islands*, *Queen’s Quarterly* 69 (1962-1963): 638. Writing on Fay’s volume on Huskisson, Alexander Brady commented that it was “at once fascinating and puzzling. It almost totally ignored the conventional rules of biography.” See Alexander Bradley, *William Huskisson and Liberal Reform* (London: Clarendon, 1967), vi.

109 G.A. Frecker to Fay, 13 February 1956, CRFP, D/1571/5/3, PRONI.

110 Jeff A. Webb, “Revisiting Fence Building: Keith Matthews and Newfoundland Historiography,” *Canadian Historical Review* 91, no. 2 (June 2010): 319.

111 See John Mannion, *Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada: A Study of Cultural Transfer and Adaptation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); Mannion, “Irish Merchants Abroad: The Newfoundland Experience 1750-1850,” *Newfoundland Studies* 2, no. 2 (1986): 127-190; “. . . Notoriously Disaffected to the Government . . .”: British Allegations of Irish Disloyalty in the Eighteenth-Century Newfoundland,” *Newfoundland Studies* 16, no. 1 (2000): 1-29; Aidan O’Hara, “The Entire Island is United . . .”: The Attempted United Irish Rising in Newfoundland, 1800,” *History Ireland* 8, no. 1 (2000): 18-21; and Johanne Trew, “The Forgotten Irish? Contested Sites and Narratives of Nation in Newfoundland,” *Ethnologies* 27, no. 2 (2005): 43-77.