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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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THE EXPULSION OF THE CANADIANS

By JEAN NICHOL

By the fourth article of the Definitive Treaty of Peace of 1763, the French and Canadians were allowed to emigrate from Canada within eighteen months after the ratification of the Treaty on February 10. The legend, current among historians of the last century,¹ that from a thousand to twelve hundred emigrated, among these the majority of the noblesse, has been dispelled. In their despatches to the Lords of Trade, Haldimand reported that there were only five emigrants from Trois Rivières,² and Murray stated that in all there were only two hundred and seventy emigrants from the colony.³ Even the officers of justice, who had been in the service of the King of France, chose to remain in Canada. The emigrants were chiefly French officers and their families. Among these may have been those officers who had returned to Canada from France after its cession to Great Britain, in order to settle their affairs. Those who had the Croix de St. Louis could not take the oath of allegiance without a formal permission from the King of France, so that there was little likelihood of their remaining in Canada. However, there were others who seemed desirous of settling in the country, and Governor Murray did not advise their expulsion, as he thought they might become useful subjects. Their return to Canada had alarmed some people, but the Governor thought it very natural, for in Canada they could live cheaply, most of them had relatives in the country and possessed some property, whereas in France they had nothing, were despised and lacked even the necessities of life.

¹ Bibaud, "Histoire du Canada," p. 11; Garneau, "Histoire du Canada," 2, p. 393.

² B. 2, p. 24, Haldimand to Gage, May 29, 1764.

³ Q. 2, p. 170, Murray to Halifax, Aug. 21, 1764.

⁴ Murray Papers p. 34, Murray to Amherst, Dec. 4, 1763.

(References to documents are all from the Public Archives of Canada.)

The reasons given by Murray for the return of the French officers to Canada may be a partial explanation of the small number of emigrants out of a population of eighty thousand. A French-Canadian historian has lavished praise upon the Canadians because they did not, in cowardice, desert the post of peril, of honour, and of duty in 1764.¹ It is difficult, however, to determine just what their ultimate fate would have been if they had emigrated. They would not have been welcomed in France, while conditions in the French colonies of Louisiana or the West Indies were so alien to them as to deter them from making the venture. Therefore it does not seem that the Canadians merit either praise or censure for their decision to remain in the country which had been the home of their forefathers for a century and a half.

British Civil Government was established in Canada on August 10, 1764, which was the date set for the expiration of the term allowed for the emigration of the Canadians. Since no more Canadians could now lawfully leave the country with their movable property it might be thought that Murray, who had been appointed Governor of Canada, would no longer fear their removal. On the contrary, however, the Governor became obsessed with the notion that the majority of the Canadians would either leave voluntarily or would be expelled from Canada. The germ of this idea may be found in Murray's report upon the Province in 1762, where he stated that few, if any, desired to emigrate, indeed, "their greatest dread is lest they should meet with the fate of the Acadians and be torn from their native country."² But Murray himself did not consider for a moment that the British Government would countenance such a proceeding, he rather proceeded upon the assumption that directly or indirectly the attitude of the British merchants and traders in Canada would lead to the expulsion of the Canadians.

As the French-Canadians were not expelled from Canada, nor did they emigrate in large numbers, any suppositions upon the subject would seem rather futile, were it not that Governor Murray's policy toward the Canadians was coloured by his dread of such an event. Throughout his governorship, Murray consistently adopted a policy of conciliation toward the Canadians, and there is little doubt but that his spirit of clemency was partly actuated by the fear of their emigration, if they should but suspect that the history of their unfortunate fellow countrymen was likely to be repeated. To Murray the forcible ejection of the Acadians was a perpetual warning of the eventual fate of the French Canadians if they should fall victim to the prejudice and rapacity of the British merchants. Undoubtedly Murray in his zeal for the welfare of the King's New Subjects was negligent of the Old, and the halo he placed on the Canadians cast a radiance which deepened the Stygian darkness surrounding the British merchants and traders. His sincere love for the French Canadians was fostered by their submission and docility, while to them his tirades and outbursts of temper were merely reminiscent of some of the greatest of their own governors. His facility in speaking their language, aided by his natural fluency of tongue, endeared him to them, and he repaid their love with his protection. Murray's whole career in Canada is permeated by his friendly attitude toward the French Canadians and, which is not so commendable, by his antagonism toward the British subjects.

During the Règne Militaire Murray summed up the racial situation in the colony as follows: "The People I have Govern'd, near five years, are composed of a Conquering Army who claim a sort of Right to lord it over the Vanquished; of a distress'd people stript of all their Substance, real and imaginary, dreading the fate of their Religion, and Accustomed to an Arbitrary Government, And of a Sett of free British Merchants, as they are pleased to Stile themselves, who, with the prospect of great gain, have come to a Country

¹ Chapais, "Cours d'histoire du Canada," p. 20.

² Shortt and Doughty, "Constitutional Documents," p. 80.

where there is no Money, and who think themselves Superior in Rank and Fortune to the Soldier, and the Canadian, deeming the first Voluntary, and the Second born Slaves."¹

Apparently the situation became more critical after the establishment of civil government, and Murray unsparingly denounced the British Subjects for their oppression of the Canadians, ". . . . a miserable People, who after having undergone the worst Calamities War can inflict, if not supported, must now either abandon their all, or submit to the Persecution of the most cruel, ignorant, rapacious, Fanatics, who ever existed."²

The following extract is in much the same strain: "Little, very little, will content the New Subjects but nothing will satisfy the Licentious Fanatics Trading here, but the expulsion of the Canadians who are perhaps the bravest and the best race upon the Globe, a Race, who cou'd they be indulged with a few privileges wch. the Laws of England deny to Roman Catholics at home, wou'd soon get the better of every National Antipathy to their Conquerors and become the most faithful and most useful set of Men in this American Empire."³

In this precarious state of affairs Murray felt that he must guard the helpless habitants from their oppressors. A picturesque passage in a confidential letter illustrates this point: ". . . . the poor Canadians have no protector but me General (Burton) thinks they should all be made into a Pye and sent to Rochelle, (Lt. Col.) Gabriel (Christie) has no objection to Assist as Pastery Cook but insists upon gutting and squeezing all the redundant juices from the Animals himself before they are put into the Crust."⁴

Throughout the woof and warp of the complex problem which confronted Governor Murray there serves as a link the crimson thread of the survival of French Canada. Would it survive or be merged and lost in the institutions of its hereditary foes? The fate of the Canadians as French Catholics hung in the balance, to be decided by the weight thrown into the scales by the first British Governor. Murray's adoption of a conciliatory policy toward the French Canadians was an important factor in attaching them to the British Government. It was likewise instrumental in preserving a distinctive French-Canadian nationality in Canada. Therefore since he was undoubtedly influenced by the tragic episode of the expulsion of the Acadians in his attitude toward the French Canadians, his contacts with the former are of interest.

After the surrender of the French fortress of Louisburg Murray was left in command of the troops at Halifax under Governor Lawrence, who had been primarily responsible for the expulsion of the Acadians a few years before. It is probable that a brief sojourn in Nova Scotia of one short winter, gave Murray a sufficiently intimate knowledge of the state of that province after the expulsion of the Acadians, to make a profound impression upon his mind of the sufferings and hardships of the refugees.

Upon his appointment, first as Military Governor of Quebec and then as Civil Governor, the similarity between the conquest of Acadia and of Canada must have impressed him, and he was fearful that the history of the maritime colony might be repeated. Murray himself later drew the analogy in his defence against the accusation of the British merchants against him. ". . . . I did my utmost to gain the hearts of the Canadians, to conciliate their Affections to our Government, by doing so I displeased the Little Protestant Traders who all, Quakers, Puritans, Anabaptists, Presbyterians, Atheists, Infidels and even the Jews joined in Protesting against any Consideration being paid to the poor Canadians, and were happy in finding an Opportunity of Insulting a Gentleman of the Country, those of them who had been honoured with the Croix de St. Louis were the particular objects of their hatred and Contempt. They well

¹ Q. 2, pp. 108-109, Murray to Lords of Trade, April 24, 1764.

² Murray Papers, 2, pp. 170-171, Murray to Lord Eglinton, Oct. 27, 1764.

³ Q. 2, pp. 233-234, Murray to Lords of Trade, Oct. 29, 1764.

⁴ M. 116, Murray to Abercrombie, July 19, 1765.

knew if they could drive the Gentry and people of condition out of the Country that few of the lower Class would remain, that they would follow the Example of their Seigneurs, whose removal they would naturally impute to the fear of being treated by us as the Acadians had been a few years before."¹

Murray makes another reference pertaining to this supposition. He had suggested to the Lords of Trade that the Canadians settled in the lands reserved by the Proclamation of 1763 for the Indians, should be provided for in the Province of Quebec, if it were thought necessary to remove them, rather than have them settled in Louisiana. He continues, "I am certain the attention I propose will have every good Effect upon the Canadians in this Province; the Fate of the Acadians their Neighbors, is still fresh in their Memories, and were they to see their Brethren from above wandering and unprovided for it is to be fear'd they would apprehend their Turn to be next."²



UNVEILING CEREMONIES AT FORT CUMBERLAND (FORT BEAUSÉJOUR), NEAR AMHERST, N.S.

Whether the Canadians themselves were as apprehensive of their expulsion as Murray thought, must ever remain a debatable point, but Murray himself was firmly convinced of it. When he became Military Governor of Quebec he came into contact with the Acadians who had found their way to Canada. From that time forward until his departure the Governor was connected at intervals with the settlement of these wanderers upon the face of the earth, and his primary impressions were thereby strengthened.

After the surrender of Quebec, about two hundred Acadians, who were given a pass by General Murray,³ marched to the mouth of the St. John river. On September 18, 1761, about two years later, the Governor and Council at Halifax decided that the Acadian families who had returned from Canada should

¹ Murray Papers, 3, pp. 242-243.

² Q. 2, p. 79, Murray to Halifax, Mar. 9, 1764.

³ A. G. Doughty, "The Acadian Exiles," pp. 151-152.

be removed from the river St. John.¹ It was evidently the opinion of Lieutenant-Governor Belcher of Nova Scotia, that the Acadians, particularly those who had settled at Restigouche and Miramichi, had malignant designs upon the British. He surmised from the terms of the Capitulation of Montreal regarding the Acadians, that Vaudreuil "thought it of consequence to the French interest, that these Acadians (from New England) should be resettled in Nova Scotia even although Canada itself was surrendered."²

Governor Murray wrote to Belcher that most of the Acadians from Restigouche had gone to Beauséjour and Louisburg. He did not consider it a good plan to resettle the Acadians in Nova Scotia—"the measure indeed does not seem to me so Eligible, as the very spot must renew to them in all succeeding generations the miseries the Present one has endured, and will perhaps alienate forever their affections from its Government, however just and Equitable it may be."³ Almost half a year elapsed before Belcher received Murray's communication; in his reply he states that the Council concur with Murray's opinion, and that if the Acadians are to be allowed to remain at all in America, "the distant precincts of Canada will be most advantageous."⁴ Referring to this letter from Lt.-Governor Belcher, Murray wrote to the Earl of Egremont, that it would be impossible to transport the Acadians that season, nor does he think it right to allow either Acadians or Canadians to settle within the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where they might carry on an illicit trade if any of the islands should be ceded to France.⁵

After the Peace of Paris of 1763 the Acadians could no longer be regarded as a menace. Many of them followed the Champlain-Richelieu route to Quebec, and settled at L'Acadie, St. Grégoire, Nicolet, Bécancour, St. Jacques-l'Achigan, St. Philippe, and Laprairie.⁶ It is estimated that the province of Quebec received over fifteen hundred of those who escaped deportation, besides many who came later.⁷

The only reference in the Council Book at Quebec to the Acadians who had settled within the province, concerns a few families who had fled to the Bay of Chaleur after their expulsion by Lawrence. In 1761, when armed vessels were sent by the Halifax Government to take them all up, some of them took refuge in the woods, and later settled at Bonaventure, Pesbebiac, Port Daniel, and Pasbo, where they gained their livelihood by fishing. Several of the British traders reported that they were a scurrilous lot, but useful in the fisheries.⁸ Governor Murray applied to the Lords of Trade for advice, but received none while he was in Quebec. He himself felt that it was expedient to remove them, and place them more immediately under the "Eye of Government."⁹

Governor Murray had issued a Proclamation on March 1, 1765, to encourage settlement in the province. An appeal was made to Governor Bernard of Massachusetts by the Acadians in that colony to be transported to Quebec, in order that they might take advantage of the terms of Governor Murray's Proclamation.¹⁰ The House of Representatives resolved that the Governor be required to write to the Governor of Quebec regarding the Acadians who wished to go thither.¹¹ Governor Murray, shortly before his return to England, replied that "it will be for the good of the British Empire in General and that of this

¹ Can. Arch. Report, 1905, 2, App. L, p. 257.

² *Ibid.*, p. 262, Belcher to Lords of Trade, April 17, 1761.

³ Can. Arch. Report, 1905, 2, App. L, p. 262, Murray to Belcher, Sept. 20, 1762.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 263, Belcher to Murray, March 25, 1762.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 263, Murray to Egremont, June 7, 1762.

⁶ A. G. Doughty, "The Acadian Exiles," p. 157.

⁷ Can. Arch. Report, 1905, App. A, p. XV.

⁸ Que. Legis. Council, A., pp. 261-262, May 9, 1765.

⁹ C.O. 42, 3, p. 5, July 15, 1765.

¹⁰ Can. Arch. Report, 1905, App. E, p. 95, Extracts from Arch. of Mass., Jan. 13, 1766.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Feb. 20, 1766.

Province in particular that these people were settled here upon the same footing with His Majesty's New Canadian subjects."¹ He could not, however, assist them with provisions.

Upon their signifying their readiness to take the oath of fidelity, they were allowed to depart from Boston.² Notices in the *Quebec Gazette* indicate that about ninety men, women, and children had arrived in the province. The Council decided to allow them provisions for one month, and an advertisement was inserted in the *Quebec Gazette*, requesting the seigneurs to allow the Acadians to settle the unconceded lands of their seigneuries.³

The basis of Murray's policy toward the Canadians seems to have been somewhat as follows:—

- (a) Canada was an important conquest and a possible base for the domination of the Thirteen Colonies.⁴
- (b) The backbone of Canada was the Canadians, who were docile, submissive and responsive to conciliatory treatment. Moreover they were the landowners, and as such must be retained at all costs.
- (c) The British merchants and traders had only come for gain, and few were desirous of owning property. Therefore they could not be relied upon to help build up the country, but must be regarded in the light of "Birds of Passage."⁵ Thus the interests of the landholders and the traders were diametrically opposite, and the welfare of the country demanded that the permanent inhabitants be conciliated. (In an account of the lands and lots of ground granted by the Governor and Council since the establishment of Civil Government there are only fifteen merchants mentioned as having received grants.⁶ The grants in general consisted of lots of ground in the town of Quebec suitable for building a wharf or house.)
- (d) Furthermore the merchants as a class were anti-French. Therefore it behoved the Governor to conciliate the French-Canadians, lest either they leave voluntarily, and this fear was removed between 1763-1766, or be driven out either by governmental pressure or the animosity of the British merchants.

Although the idea of the expulsion of the Canadians may now be considered absurd and highly improbable, yet it cannot be denied that Governor Murray was quite sincere in his fear that they might be driven to leave the country. He was untiring in his efforts on their behalf, and laid the foundation for a policy of toleration in religion and law, while he always used their language in his dealings with them. Governor Murray has been censured for his pronounced antipathy to the British Traders, but it must be remembered that at that time there seemed little likelihood of an immediate influx of British settlers, hence it behoved the Governor to retain those who already inhabited the land.

In conclusion Governor Murray may be allowed to vindicate his own policy. ". . . . I glory in having been accused of warmth and firmness in protecting the King's Canadian Subjects, and of doing the utmost in my Power to gain to my Royal Master the affection of that Brave hardy People; whose Emigration, if ever it shall happen, will be an irreparable Loss to this Empire, to prevent which I declare I would cheerfully submit to greater Calumnies & Indignities if greater can be devised, than hitherto I have undergone."⁷

¹ *Ibid.*, April 28, 1766, p. 96.

² *Can. Arch. Report*, 1905, App. E, p. 96, June 2, 1766.

³ "*Quebec Gazette*," Sept. 1, 8, 15, 1766.

⁴ *Murray Papers*, 1, p. 6, Murray to Amherst, Nov. 1759.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3, p. 242.

⁶ *Q.* 4, p. 168a.

⁷ *Shel. Mss.* 64, p. 105. Murray to Shelburne, Aug. 20, 1766.