

Governor Sir Humphrey Walwyn on United States Bases in Newfoundland, 15 October 1945

Melvin Baker and Peter Neary

Following the September 1939 outbreak of war between the United Kingdom and Germany, the British-appointed Commission of Government, which had been administering Newfoundland since 1934, quickly concluded that the defence of key installations in the country was beyond its capacity.¹ Accordingly, the Commission urged that Canada be asked to meet the need. London at first resisted this notion, but in June 1940 — the month of Dunkirk and the fall of France — gave way. On 17 June 1940 five RCAF planes arrived at the Newfoundland Airport at Gander, and the Canadian force eventually ran the operation for the duration of the war. Canada also built a big air-base at Goose Bay, Labrador, and ran a naval station in St. John's on behalf of the British Admiralty.

American forces arrived in Newfoundland soon after the Anglo-American Destroyers for Bases agreement was reached in early September 1940. Under this arrangement, made in an exchange of diplomatic notes, the United Kingdom promised the United States the lease of base sites for 99 years in a number of British territories in the western hemisphere — in the Caribbean, British Guiana,² Bermuda, and Newfoundland. In return, the British were to receive 50 used

American destroyers, though the bases in Newfoundland and Bermuda were given “freely and without consideration.”³ An American party chaired by Rear Admiral John W. Greenslade (1880–1950) soon arrived in Newfoundland, and base sites were chosen in St. John’s, Argentia/Marquise,⁴ and Stephenville. Construction was pushed ahead during the winter of 1940–41, and on 27 March 1941 the Anglo-American Leased Bases Agreement was signed in London.⁵ In the negotiations leading to that agreement, which governed the operation of the bases, Newfoundland was represented by Commissioners L.E. Emerson and J.H. Penson, the former a native son and the latter British.⁶ Many Newfoundlanders worked on the construction of the American bases and many more found employment on them once they began operations. The impact of the bases on Newfoundland life — economic, social, and cultural — was profound and is the subject of an extensive body of historical writing. Governor Sir Humphrey Walwyn’s despatch of 15 October 1945, printed below by permission and with minor corrections (including the renumbering of paragraphs 19–26),⁷ is an important contemporary account and is included here to supplement and enrich established knowledge.⁸ The archival reference to the despatch, addressed to the Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs, is: The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, United Kingdom, DO114/111, 44-49.

The origins of Walwyn’s despatch lie in a request, dated 21 October 1943, sent by the Colonial Office in London to colonies affected by the 1941 agreement, asking “for material for a paper giving a general appreciation of the effect to date and the probable future effect . . . of the leasing of the bases.”⁹ The proposed paper would not only be of “value in itself” but would be “of great assistance in considering specific problems of a similar nature which may arise in other parts of the world, e.g., in the Pacific after the war, as well as other general post-war problems of co-operation between the United Kingdom and the United States.” The document envisaged would be circulated “for the information of the Departments concerned” but “might also serve as a basis for a memorandum to be circulated to the Cabinet.” Specifically,

the colonial governments approached were asked to provide information under 11 heads:

- (1) Reactions of general public and legislatures:—
 - (a) when news of leasing of bases was first received;
 - (b) when details of London Agreement dated 27th March, 1941, were made known;
 - (c) subsequently.

Information furnished under this Head should indicate so far as possible the trend of reactions amongst different sections of the community.

- (2) Effect of establishment of bases (a) on present social and economic position of Colony, (b) on future economic and social position in the Colony.

- (3) How far is need for permanent employment of troops in the Caribbean after the war affected by establishment of bases.

- (4) Relations between local United States authorities and local British Civil and Service officials.

- (5) Relations of United States forces with general public. Effect [on] these relations of presence of United States coloured troops in various colonies.

- (6) Discipline of United States forces generally; if at the time the report is made, the United States Visiting Forces Act has been extended locally, what reactions if any have resulted.

- (7) Practical difficulties arising out of the provisions of Agreement, e.g., customs, jurisdictions, etc., etc. What evidence is there that the general public is satisfied or otherwise with the exercise of jurisdiction by United States Courts in matters where general public is concerned.

- (8) Information as to practical working of Defence Agreement (ABC.3).

- (9) Likelihood of change in attitude of legislatures and general public after the war.
- (10) Any suggestions for improving the relations between the local United States authorities and the Colonial Government authorities and between the United States Forces and the general public, for the remainder of the period of the lease.
- (11) What concessions have the United States authorities been granted outside the Agreement apart from such concessions which it has been agreed with the United States Government should be granted in all Base Colonies; information should also be given of any instances where local United States authorities have taken action without first obtaining consent of Colonial Government as required under the Agreement.¹⁰

On 27 January 1944 Sir Eric Machtig of the Dominions Office asked Walwyn to prepare a report along “the lines indicated in the Colonial Office despatch,” noting that heads 3–8 of the instructions sent to the colonial governments were “not applicable in the case of Newfoundland owing to its special position in relation to defence.”¹¹ It would “clearly be useful” to include in the memorandum to be drafted in London “an account of the position in Newfoundland.” Walwyn’s 15 October 1945 despatch answered this request.

When he submitted this document, Walwyn (1879–1957), a vice-admiral, was in his tenth year as Governor of Newfoundland.¹² He had arrived in St. John’s in 1936 when the country was in the grip of the Great Depression and he had witnessed first-hand the sudden economic revival that had come with Canadian and American military spending. He and Lady Walwyn were frequent visitors to the American bases established in Newfoundland and liked to entertain American brass at Government House. He knew whereof he wrote.

DOCUMENT

DESPATCH

from

NEWFOUNDLAND GOVERNMENT

(Received 22nd October, 1945)

(No. 232) St. John's, 15th October, 1945.

My Lord,

I have the honour to refer to Sir Eric Machtig's letter to me of the 27th of January 1944, enclosing copy of the secret despatch from the Secretary of State for the Colonies of the 21st of October, 1943, addressed to the Governments of Colonies in which United States bases are situated and requesting material for a paper giving a general appreciation of the effect to date and the probable future effect on the Colonies concerned of the leasing of the bases. In that letter Sir Eric intimated that a report on the same lines of the position in Newfoundland would be of value.

2. At my request the Commissioners whose Departments have been mainly affected by the presence and activities of the American bases have collected the material they thought suitable for such a paper, but its complete compilation has been prevented until now by a number of unavoidable causes. While I regret this delay, it has been of some advantage in that the cessations of all hostilities and the preparations already under way for the return to peace-time conditions enable us to take a rather clearer view of the subject, both backward and forward, than was possible a few months ago.¹³

3. *Reactions of general public.* As was to be expected, the publication of the Bases Agreement of 27th March, 1941, and of the exact terms on which the United States had acquired the Newfoundland bases, had a profound effect and was received with somewhat mixed feelings. It must be remembered that the American forces were already stationed

here and the scope and nature of the bases was foreshadowed in the work already begun at Fort Pepperrell,¹⁴ near St. John's, and at Argentinia, in Placentia Bay. There had been much speculation as to the real terms of the transaction and this was settled by the Agreement.

4. It is probably correct to say that the almost universal feeling in Newfoundland was twofold; one of regret that the country's sovereign rights should be so seriously invaded and one — much outweighing the other — of the grave necessity that dictated it. This feeling was perhaps best expressed by the *Evening Telegram* in the words, "Under the existing grave circumstances *The Telegram* feels certain that no Government of this country would have had any alternative to acceptance." The *Fisherman's Worker's Tribune*,¹⁵ perhaps the strongest and most consistent critic of the present regime, said much the same thing. In detail, however, there was a good deal of criticism of the Agreement: Customs privileges, free use of local roads by heavy military traffic, civil and criminal jurisdiction over the bases and their occupants — these and other matters were questioned and discussed. The actual effect of some of these features is considered below.

5. During the four years and more that have since elapsed objection to the deal on this broad ground of national sovereignty has from time to time been revived, sometimes on its own merits, sometimes in association with criticism of the companion policy represented by the leases and grants of land for Canadian airports; but it has mostly emanated from a small minority, actuated either by understandable sentiment or by political antagonism to the Commission of Government. Over against it may be set the realization from the beginning by the great mass of the people of the solid benefits, in the way of employment, trade, customs revenue and imported money, that would accrue, and have in fact accrued, from the establishment of the bases.

6. Prophecy as to the future of the bases and their effect upon Newfoundland society and economy is of course difficult. Personal contacts between the American forces and Newfoundland citizens have on the whole been very friendly and understanding; Newfoundlanders have come to accept the presence and society of their visitors

as part of the ordered course of things. In that respect it may perhaps be said that the bases at Argentia and Stephenville are too remote from the general population and life of the Island to have much effect. It is different in the case of Fort Pepperrell, which is almost part of the capital city, so that traffic and intercourse between them, already fairly free during the war may expand considerably under the easier conditions of peace.

7. It is not likely that the direct influence of the bases upon the country's economy will in the future be very great. If, as the indications now are, they are put upon a care and maintenance basis, some two or three thousand workers will probably get more or less permanent employment; and a certain amount of agricultural and other local products will always be in demand. But in several indirect ways, not originating in the bases themselves, they may have considerable effect. It may well be that the factors at present most imponderable will prove the most important. The bases have done much to make Americans better known to Newfoundlanders; they have probably done more to make Newfoundland better known to Americans. Many of the men stationed here have expressed their intention of returning as peacetime visitors; the sporting attractions of the country are becoming more widely known and advertised. If, as seems certain, tourists visit the Island in increasing numbers, the bases will be among the first points of interest. They have assisted materially in the improvement of road systems and the building of new. They are already linked with one another by air; it is most probable that the United States Government will wish them to be connected by road also. In short, and by way of general summary, the very presence of such large modern and well equipped stations, and the removal of the military restrictions which have heretofore kept their activities within narrow bounds, should make them a factor of much importance in the country's progress and development.

8. *Effect on present and future social and economic position of Newfoundland.* In what I have said about the reactions of Newfoundlanders to the Bases Agreement I have also dealt with this head on very broad

lines, but many interesting details can be added of the practical effect of its working upon the country's economy. It may be useful if I give a brief account and description of each base showing its location, size and nature and its effect upon the local population. The bases are three in number. Fort Pepperell, near St. John's; Fort McAndrew,¹⁶ at Argentia, Placentia Bay; and Harmon Field¹⁷ at Stephenville, Bay St. George. It will be convenient to consider them first separately and then in their collective effect.

9. *Fort Pepperell.* This is an Army Post, designed no doubt to meet the threat of invasion and serving also as a protection of the Canadian airport at Torbay, which played so important a part in the Battle of the Atlantic. The site selected, after very careful examination by United States engineers, was on the north bank of Quidi Vidi Lake; in a direct line the nucleus of the base is about a mile merely from the Customs House in St. John's. Later two other areas were added to the Lease as necessary adjuncts: a target range area to the north of the base and a waterside area at Signal Hill "Battery" at the eastern end of the harbour of St. John's to provide a site for a marine dock. The total area acquired was about eleven hundred acres.

10. The acquisition of the Quidi Vidi area involved the dispossession of some fifty families and the removal of their dwellings. These were mostly small farmers, producing vegetables and dairy produce for the St. John's market. It was first thought that this would cause a serious disturbance but the fear was not justified by the result. The owners were satisfied with the compensation awarded them; most of them bought new farms or otherwise resettled themselves; and the effect upon St. John's was negligible. The marine dock displaced some eighty-five families, practically all shore fishermen operating on the fishing grounds near St. John's. Here also no serious complaint was made by those dispossessed, but it seems a fact that the city's fresh fish supply did suffer to some extent.

11. *Fort McAndrew.* This consists of a Naval and Air Base established on the Argentia Peninsula and an Army Base contiguous to it on the mainland. Between them these bases cover approximately three

thousand four hundred acres. It was necessary to uproot virtually the whole settlement, consisting of some two hundred and fifty families, and to demolish all buildings on the areas, including houses, barns, shops, churches and parish halls. Much greater concern was felt on this score than in the case of St. John's or Stephenville, but in the event the clearing of the area and the "transplanting" of the settlers in new homes and places of business was effected with surprisingly little trouble or complaint. One possible factor in this result was the fact that many families settled in vacant tracts adjoining the leased area in the expectation, largely fulfilled, that they would obtain steady employment in the work of constructing the bases.

12. *Harmon Field*. This is an Army airport built at Stephenville, Bay St. George, on the west coast of the Island. It originally comprised about nine hundred acres, but an extension was found necessary and a further seventeen hundred acres were added by supplementary lease in 1942. This was almost entirely a farming territory and held some of the best agricultural land in the country. Some two hundred and twenty-five owners were dispossessed. Fortunately, there was extensive flat and uncultivated land adjoining the area selected and many farmers simply moved a short distance and built new homesteads, where they could easily obtain employment on the base and at the same time sell to it a certain amount of dairy and farm produce.

13. In a country such as Newfoundland, where large construction projects are few and far between, the preparation of the sites for these bases, the erection of necessary buildings, the making of runways and the installation of works and machinery called for the labour of many workmen, skilled and unskilled, and had a very great effect upon the employment situation. Unemployment, severe before the war, had virtually ceased by the summer of 1941, though of course other factors than the American bases also contributed to this result. The effect was greatest where it was most needed, in the large class of unskilled workmen and day labourers. Newfoundland had comparatively few trained technicians or master foremen, though such as were available found ready employment. Most of this class had to be imported from the

United States; but the basic labour was supplied almost entirely in the country. Work on the bases, quite considerable in 1941, reached its peak in the summer of 1942, when the records show that some thirteen thousand day labourers were on the payroll. By the following summer this figure had diminished by about one half; by the end of 1944 to almost one quarter, at which level it has since been maintained. To these figures must be added a substantial number of clerical and office workers, male and female, many of whom may be said to have got permanent employment.

14. In their effect upon the labour situation, as in other directions, the American bases cannot be fairly considered in isolation; they must be regarded as part only, though undoubtedly the largest part, of a considerable and varied war effort. They combined with the demands made upon the labour market by all three Canadian services, represented by the great enlargement of Gander Airport and the Botwood seaplane base, the building of Torbay Airport and the provision of considerable naval facilities in St. John's, Bay Bulls and elsewhere to produce a condition of countrywide activity unknown before and of particular benefit during the winter months, when so many men are ordinarily idle. The effect was not, of course, all beneficial and on the credit side and some of the difficulties it created are treated later on, when I deal with Head 7 of the despatch; but it may fairly be said that the large volume of steady employment at high wages upon the bases during the war years has been responsible more than anything else for the present widespread prosperity and large national surplus.

15. In addition to this direct effect upon labour, the construction of the bases indirectly, and in some directions substantially affected business and industry in the country. The lumber industry, for example, received a sudden and great stimulus; for, while all machinery, furnishings and equipment were imported from the United States, the contractors and services looked to Newfoundland to supply much rough lumber and material, especially for the construction of barracks and other temporary buildings. As was inevitable also, there were from time to time shortages in the supply of more valuable necessities, such

as ironmongery, piping and electrical equipment, which were made good as far as possible from local supplies and through local agents. This was also the case with much of the Canadian and British war enterprises and between them they were largely responsible for shortages in civilian supplies, sometimes very acute, and for the sharp rise in many commodity prices. Finally under this head, a great fillip was given to certain specialized businesses, such as fresh milk supply and soft drink manufacture, while the retail stores, particularly in St. John's did greatly increased business through the patronage of American service personnel for many private and official purposes.

16. Head 3 of the despatch is not applicable to the case of Newfoundland.

17. *Relations between local United States authorities and local British civil and service officials.* On the whole these have been excellent. From the start, as might have been expected, some trouble arose on the difficult question of jurisdiction: these are mentioned more fully below. The exact limits of the bases were not always appreciated by the American authorities and some areas were appropriated, manned and guarded — in some cases even built upon — before the title had been acquired. The necessity for haste and the urgency of what seemed to be the military need may be pleaded in excuse, and in every instance the matter has been satisfactorily adjusted. Some individual and personal cases of friction and misunderstanding occurred, as was probably unavoidable; but there was always the closest co-operation and consultation, when the occasion demanded, between the United States Department, the resident United States Consul and the American Navy, Army and Air Force Commanders on the one side and the Commission of Government, the Department of Defence and Newfoundland military authorities on the other.

18. *Relations of United States forces with the general public.* These also have on the whole been most satisfactory, and even in some instances cordial. If they are not closer in some respects it is probably due to dissimilarity of tastes and ways of living than to any national feelings. The living conditions and amenities and attractions inside the

bases themselves are on such scale that the forces have no great need for Newfoundland hospitality; and in the "outport" bases, Harmon Field and Fort McAndrew, the possibilities of social intercourse are necessarily limited. Yet even there, and much more in St. John's, the men have mixed with the local population freely and easily. There has been much give and take between the canteens of American, British, Canadian and Newfoundland forces; the base at Fort Pepperrell has several times been thrown open to visitors; quite a number of American soldiers have carried off Newfoundland wives; and at private parties as well as in public places of entertainment their uniform has been much in evidence. During the summer of 1945 a series of international athletic meets were organized and carried out very successfully at St. John's, Bell Island and Argentia, and a friendly rivalry established which should grow in the years ahead and do much to create cordial relationships.

19. *Discipline of United States forces generally.* Assuming that this has reference to the conduct of the United States forces outside the bases and in relation to Newfoundland citizens, their record on the whole has been exceedingly good. The total number of actual breaches of the law, including offences ranging from drunkenness and rowdiness up to felonies like bigamy and rape, and whether tried in civil courts or by courts martial, would probably be considered small for garrison towns in time of war. Discipline was perhaps a little lax in the first years, but since 1942 and particularly since General Brooks¹⁸ assumed command at Fort Pepperrell, it has been excellent. One rather false impression seems to have been caused by a superficial knowledge of the facts, which I should like to correct. St. John's where British, American, Canadian and Newfoundland armed forces were stationed and where ships constantly brought crews of all nationalities, was for four years a very cosmopolitan place. Add to this the effect of the blackout and darkened streets and the propensity of soldiers and sailors to carouse and quarrel, and it is not surprising that there were from time to time outbursts of rowdiness, small epidemics of window smashing and so on. In all this it is only fair to say that the American

forces played very little part. On the whole they were distinctly better behaved in the mass than their Canadian friends and than the gangs of civilian toughs who were often at the bottom of "international" street fights for which the visitors were too readily blamed. In their general comportment towards civilians the American soldier and sailor were required by their regulations to observe a high standard of behaviour and almost always did so; there is no evidence worth while that they exhibited arrogance or a feeling of superiority. On the contrary their general attitude was one of friendliness; the American took the Newfoundlander as he found him and the Newfoundlander did the same with the American.

20. *Practical difficulties arising out of provisions of Agreement.* The actual working of the Agreement from the beginning faced both the American and Newfoundland authorities with a number of problems and difficulties, none of them, happily, insoluble and all of them resolved eventually in a satisfactory manner. They may be roughly divided into two classes: direct and formal, created by the terms of the Agreement, and indirect and practical, arising out of the effect upon the economic and social structure of its actual operation. The first includes such matters as Customs duties and jurisdiction; the second such matters as rates of wages and salaries, competition between established business and the bases, resultant shortage of labour and supplies, and so on. While these latter may perhaps more properly belong under Head 2, it may be convenient to consider them here, since they were "difficulties" which stemmed logically from the working of the Agreement.

21. *Customs.* Prior to the conclusion of the Bases Agreement the United States forces, who had earlier arrived in Newfoundland, were granted Customs privileges on a provisional basis generally similar to those subsequently provided under the Agreement. Difficulties arose regarding the extension of Customs privileges to civilian personnel of the Base Contractors. In conformity with the wide interpretation of the Bases Agreement eventually adopted in the Base Colonies, it was agreed in Newfoundland that the personal belongings of such personnel,

and the stores they consumed, including food, tobacco, liquor, fuel, etc., should be allowed to enter free of duty, i.e., they were given privileges similar to those of members of the United States Forces. At this time separate messes had been established at the United States Bases for Newfoundland civilian employees, who were fed out of duty-paid stocks. Subsequently, without consulting the Newfoundland authorities, these separate messes were abolished on the grounds that they created practical difficulties, and Newfoundland as well as United States civilian employees were fed out of duty-free stocks. In the circumstances then obtaining the Newfoundland Government agreed not to press its claim for payment of duty on such foodstuffs by Newfoundland employees during the initial construction period. The United States authorities refused to accept this limitation, claiming that under the Bases Agreement they were entitled to feed the Newfoundland employees out of duty-free stocks; they also pointed out at the time that a distinction might create labour problems which would be embarrassing to them. In the view of the change in circumstances, following the termination of hostilities, and in the light of practice in the Base Colonies, where we understand no such concession has been granted or assumed, this matter has recently been raised again with the United States authorities.

22. Considerable leakages from the base of duty-free goods, particularly of liquor and cigarettes, although articles such as radios, clocks, lighters, etc., were also involved, occurred during the first two years during the construction period. These were facilitated by the residence outside the bases of many United States civilian employees, as well as of approximately one hundred Service personnel and their families. With the departure of such employees and subsequent tightening of control over military personnel (at present almost exclusively housed in the bases), together with restrictions on the quantities of cigarettes which may be sold, the present position is much more satisfactory. Nevertheless, it is obviously desirable that Customs privileges should be restricted to persons residing within the bases, and that with few exceptions duty-free supplies should be consumed within the

bases; it is unfortunate that such restrictions were not imposed by the Bases Agreement. It was necessary in 1942 to strengthen the law forbidding the transfer of duty-free goods from entitled to non-entitled persons and to increase the penalties for transferring or receiving such goods without the payment of duty. It is not surprising that cigarettes costing 6 cents a packet in the United States bases (against 19 cents in America and 35 cents retail in Newfoundland) were at times sold, or offered and accepted in lieu of currency, in payment for services rendered by Newfoundland civilians.

23. It should be mentioned that such abuse was by no means confined to United States personnel, as similar opportunities were open to members of the Canadian Forces. The illegal consumption by civilians of duty-free cigarettes undoubtedly led to a considerable loss of Government revenue; and since any addition to the price of civilian supplies would have increased the disparity compared with Service prices and would have encouraged further evasion, it became virtually impossible to raise additional war-time revenue by increasing the duty on cigarettes.

24. Another source of leakage of duty-free goods has been the presence within the bases of large numbers of Newfoundland employees. Although they were not entitled to make purchases at the Commissary Stores it was not difficult for them to arrange for purchases to be made on their behalf by entitled persons. In one of the bases (Argentina) a separate section of the Commissary Store, selling only duty-paid goods, was provided for the use of Newfoundland employees.

25. At an early date the United States authorities sought to claim refund of duty on articles purchased from duty-paid civilian stocks. Eventually they realized the extreme difficulty of substantiating refund claims of *ad valorem* duty charged on goods imported at various times and at fluctuating prices and allowed the matter to drop. At the same time they pressed for exemption from stamp duties on cheques, bills of lading, etc., and from a tax on cable messages; this exemption was granted. After considerable discussion exemption from light and harbor dues was accorded vessels owned or operated by the United

States Government, or chartered by that Government or contractors working for it which represented a considerable widening of the previously accepted use of the term “public vessels” referred to in the Bases Agreement. Light and harbor dues became payable if such a vessel proceeded to another port of Newfoundland to load non-Government cargo. Payment was to be made for quarantine services and pilotage actually rendered, and for water supplied to vessels other than warships and transports.

26. Contractors’ employees as well as Service personnel have been permitted to receive parcels without payment of duty through the United States Base Post Office, and to make purchases from Commissary stores. The United States authorities have been requested to check that importations by mail are restricted to articles for the personal use of a member of the Forces or his family. There has been no direct supervision by the Newfoundland authorities. It should be mentioned that the Commissary Stores deal in a very wide range of items, including clothing and supporting goods, and has even imported goods to meet individual orders. Customs duty has been charged on supplies imported by sale by the United Services Organization, which is situated in the City of St. John’s.¹⁹ Duty has been paid by similar Canadian organizations, and it was a condition of the lease granted to the United Services Organization that duty should be paid on its supplies. The United States authorities have, nevertheless, on several occasions asked to be relieved of this obligation, but their request has not been granted.

27. *Jurisdiction.* With the arrival in the Island of the first American armed forces a certain amount of doubt and apprehension was felt by the Newfoundland public, and in particular by the legal department of the Government, as to the treatment of cases that would certainly arise involving American and Newfoundland subjects, in both civil and criminal matters and both within and without the leased areas, and as to the possibility of conflict of authority and jurisdiction. This feeling was not altogether allayed by the publication of the Agreement, particularly as the American military authorities in the beginning showed a tendency to disregard the Agreement itself and to seek

to exercise jurisdiction over their own personnel in all circumstances. This tendency was in time checked, largely through the offices of the American legal officer, who at all times co-operated in a most helpful way with the officials of the Justice Department and early reached with them a sort of *modus operandi* for the handling of different classes of cases.

Occurrences within the leased areas presented very little difficulty. Where an American soldier or sailor was at fault, he could be dealt with summarily and effectively by the military authorities; where a British subject (invariably an employee on the base) had to be proceeded against, the base officials invariably lent their assistance, made the necessary inquiries and handed the party, if the facts required it, over to the civil authorities.

28. Difficulties most often arose, as might be expected, over matters occurring outside the bases, and for some time there was a sort of contest for jurisdiction between the civil and military powers. Very early an understanding was reached that, where no civilian or civilian property was affected, such as when a service man was arrested for drunkenness or a minor breach of the Highway Traffic Act, the police would turn the offender over to his military command for treatment. In other matters, not being offences of a military nature and involving civil rights, the offender appeared in the first instance before a local Court, the appropriate military authority being advised of the charge and given the right to attend the hearing. As a rule, in such cases, a remand was granted, during the course of which it often happened that the Base commander would request the Commissioner for Justice to waive jurisdiction and permit trial by court martial. Unless the case were essentially a breach of military discipline, such request was invariably refused and the case went to trial before the civil court. In the rare instances in which a court martial was substituted, the Department of Justice was always permitted attendance at the proceedings. Conversely, when a service man is the aggrieved party, the civil courts have always been open to him as plaintiff. This arrangement has worked very satisfactorily, though it has not been reached without

occasional differences of opinion expressed politely but firmly by both sides. Most of these differences, however, seem to have arisen not so much from any desire on the part of the American military authorities to obstruct the civil law and procedure as from their feeling, perhaps justified at times, that the local magistrate was apt to show too great leniency towards offences which they themselves, administering in times of war, would punish more severely. What matters most is that all questions that have arisen have been discussed freely and frankly and in a spirit of co-operation, and it is on this satisfactory basis rather than on strict adherence to the Bases Agreement that the present good relations between the civil and military law officers rests.

29. This same mutual understanding of local conditions largely explains the fact that the United States did not press for the extension to Newfoundland of the provisions of the United States Visiting Forces Act of 1942.²⁰ This would have required independent legislation by the Newfoundland Government; such legislation would have been resented by a people entirely English-speaking and untroubled by colour or racial differences; and it was felt by both sides to be unnecessary in any case. With the great diminution in the number of American personnel that has taken place, breaches of the law, from serious crime to petty offences, have fallen off considerably, and there is little fear that any real difficulties in this direction will crop up in the future.

30. In conclusion on this important topic, the prison records of American bases personnel from January, 1941, to date may be interesting as a broad commentary upon the discipline maintained by the troops during the war. These show that six men were sentenced in terms of one year or more and fourteen to shorter terms of imprisonment in His Majesty's Penitentiary. To this list, if all offenders are to be included, must be added those, not very numerous, who paid fines for minor breaches of the law. Considering the large number of soldiers stationed in the country during these five years and wartime conditions, particularly in seaport towns, the record would seem exceptionally good.

31. Somewhat allied to the difficulties of enforcing Customs regulations already described were problems of immigration. So far as these arose as the result of the establishment of the bases, they were due mostly to the necessity of importing foreign skilled workers. Careful check had to be kept of this type of immigrant with the possibility of espionage and sabotage always present, and it was maintained partly by the base military authorities and partly by the local Security Service working in conjunction with the police and immigration officials. On the whole this danger was very well controlled. A number of undesirables were excluded, some few were deported and all foreign workers were required to leave the country on completion of their contracts of service.

32. Perhaps the most troublesome problem created by the bases, particularly in the early days of construction, arose from the effect upon wages of the competition for labour that resulted. Base contractors, working on a cost-plus basis and by American standards, threatened by the offer of much higher wages than otherwise obtained in Newfoundland to upset the whole labour system. The Government was alert to prevent this disturbance and succeeded in keeping rates of wages for unskilled workmen down to a reasonable level and thereby drew upon itself a good deal of local criticism. In actual fact, however, the effect of the large war construction works, including many projects besides the American bases, upon wage rates was not as great as has been stated in some quarters. With increasing shortage of labour and rising costs of living, they were bound to rise in any case, and inquiry shows that at certain times and on some of the bases the wages paid workmen were actually less than those paid for similar work upon civilian enterprises.

33. The same cannot be said of the effect upon the salary scales of a large class of clerical employees. In that direction the competition of the bases was keenly felt by local business, professional and, not least, by Government services. Clerks, accountants, stenographers and others were attracted by the generous scale of salaries offered and were drawn in larger numbers than it could spare from civilian life. The

Civil Service and the teaching profession suffered severely for the first two or three years. Fortunately, construction on the bases reached its peak some two years before the end of the war, allowing many men and women to return to their regular occupations.

34. Just what part the bases played in raising the cost of living in Newfoundland to its present high figure it would be difficult to estimate. Undoubtedly, outside factors, such as increased cost of commodities and transportation rates, were mostly responsible, but the increased purchasing power of the people and the circulation of the very large amount of money brought in by the Americans certainly account for most of the "profit" elements in living costs. And while this prosperity has been all to the good and enabled so many citizens to meet living expenses which would have mounted in any case, it has also engendered more expensive tastes and already accustomed a good many people to standards of living which they may find it difficult to maintain in less prosperous times. In this last connexion one aspect of the subject may be mentioned which may not be considered too far outside the strict limits of this survey. The experience which so many Newfoundland workmen have had in the practical work of construction on the bases, and the example which the bases themselves set in many directions to their local neighbours, may have a greater effect than is at present imagined upon Newfoundland life and ways of living. The permanent buildings are admirably built, efficient in operation and attractive in appearance: and, while they are built on a scale and of materials beyond the reach of the average citizen, they do present models at first hand for him to aspire to and copy. Already the effect upon Newfoundland building and architecture, heretofore stereotyped and ugly, is discernible in new civilian building and housing schemes. Up-to-date methods in heating and plumbing, applied on the bases, are being adopted widely; for example central heating by oil burners is spreading rapidly. During the war Forts Pepperrell and McAndrew gave short courses in mechanical and technical training to civilian classes, and it is most probable that, for their own maintenance purposes, they will continue this

valuable service in future years. Even in landscape gardening and town planning they have been good object lessons; and their engineers have shown, notably in the case of the Placentia Road to Fort McAndrew,²¹ what can be done in road construction by the use of modern machinery and methods. Altogether they have probably done, and will continue to do, much towards the “modernization” of Newfoundland building, architecture, communication systems and the art of better and more comfortable living generally.

35. *Likelihood of change in attitude of legislature and general public after the war.* It seems too early yet, and we are still too near the war and its effects, to speculate with any confidence on future relations. Much would seem to depend on two factors: first, the permanent form of Government eventually adopted by Newfoundland; second, the policy of the United States towards the bases and their use. If Newfoundland returns to full self-government, it is possible that, as the war recedes into the past, her people may regard with some jealousy and impatience the continuing presence in such form of a foreign Power. On the other hand, the general feeling may be the opposite, and that seems the broad evidence at present. If — and this possibility has to be reckoned with — it seeks and obtains entry into the Canadian federation, the position will in some respects be radically altered. As to the second factor, the attitude of the American Government and public will probably determine the active, that of Newfoundlanders the passive, answer to the question. So far the whole tendency and evident desire of our American friends seems to be to confine their exclusive control and jurisdiction to the narrowest limits of the leased territory compatible with the maintenance of the bases as military outposts, and even there to allow the fullest possible access and social exchange and amenities to their civilian “lessors”. In fact, if the closest possible association and friendship between both nationals does not already exist, it is quite as much the fault of the Newfoundland citizenry as of the American, and possibly more so.

36. The most immediate and important case in point of these mutual relations is in the field of aviation, so important to both sides and

because of the Island's geographical position. In that direction things are as yet in the melting pot. The part which Harmon Field and Argentia on the one side, and Gander and Torbay on the other, will play both in transatlantic and local flying has yet to be determined, and whether the former will preserve their military character. Since the American policy seems to favour free competition in civil aviation, and the removal of restrictions as far as possible, and since Newfoundland interests would probably lie in the same direction, the prospects are good of mutually beneficial arrangements being made.

I have, &c.,

HUMPHREY WALWYN.

Governor.

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Notes

- 1 For the general history of the period, see Peter Neary, "A Garrison Country: Newfoundland and Labrador during the Second World War," *Dispatches* no. 4 (Ottawa: Canadian War Museum, Apr. 1999) and Neary, *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World, 1929-1949* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988).
- 2 The present-day Co-operative Republic of Guyana.
- 3 Neary, *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World*, 135.
- 4 Located south of the Argentia Peninsula, Marquise was one of 26 places that made up the community of Argentia (information courtesy of the Edward Lake Argentia Archival Collection).
- 5 For this agreement, see Peter Neary, "Newfoundland and the Anglo-American Leased Bases Agreement of 27 March 1941," *Canadian Historical Review* 67, no. 4 (1986): 491-519.

- 6 The Commission of Government had six commissioners, three drawn from Newfoundland and three from the United Kingdom. The British-appointed Governor chaired the Commission.
- 7 The original document has two paragraphs numbered 18 but does not have a paragraph numbered 26. Our renumbering takes account of these lapses.
- 8 See Melvin Baker and Peter Neary, "Governor Sir Humphrey Walwyn's Account of His Meetings with Churchill and Roosevelt, Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, August 1941," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 31, no. 1 (2016): 165–80; Cecilia Benoit, "Urbanizing Women Military Fashion: The Case of Stephenville Women," in Carmelita McGrath, Barbara Neis, and Marilyn Porter, eds., *Their Lives and Times, Women in Newfoundland and Labrador: A Collage* (St. John's: Killick Press, 1995), 113–27; David J. Bercuson, "SAC vs Sovereignty: The Origins of the Goose Bay Lease, 1946–1952," *Canadian Historical Review* 70, no. 2 (1989): 206–22; Raymond B. Blake, *Canadians at Last: The Integration of Newfoundland as a Province* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994; reissued in 2016 with a new introduction); Paul Bridle, ed., *Documents on Relations between Canada and Newfoundland: Volume 1, 1935–1949, Defence, Civil Affairs and Economic Affairs* (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1974); Douglas Brinkley and David R. Facey-Crowther, eds., *The Atlantic Charter* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Gary Browne, *To Serve and Protect: The Newfoundland Constabulary on the Home Front World War Two* (St. John's: DRC Publishing, 2008); James E. Candow, "The Tactical Role of American Armed Forces at Signal Hill, Newfoundland During World War II," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 88, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 1993): 25–29; John N. Cardoulis, *A Friendly Invasion: The American Military in Newfoundland, 1940–1990* (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1990); Cardoulis, *A Friendly Invasion II: A Personal Touch* (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1993); Paul Collins, "Fortress Newfoundland: How the Fear of Nazi Attack Turned Newfoundland into an Armed Camp during World War II," *Newfoundland Studies* 26, no. 2 (2011): 197–213; Stanley W. Dziuban, *Military Relations between the United States and Canada, 1939–1945* (Washington: Office of the Chief Military History, Department of the Army, 1959); Ruth

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- (Nov. 1996): 589–630.
- 9 The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, United Kingdom, DO114/111, Machtig to Walwyn, 27 Jan. 1944, 43.
 - 10 Ibid., “Heads On Which Information is Specially Desired,” 44.
 - 11 Ibid., Machtig to Walwyn, 27 Jan. 1944, 43.
 - 12 For Walwyn’s career, see Melvin Baker and Peter Neary, “Governor Sir Humphrey Walwyn’s Account of His Meetings with Churchill and Roosevelt, Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, August 1941,” *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, 31, no. 1 (2016): 165–80.
 - 13 The war in Europe had ended in May 1945 and the war in the Pacific in August 1945.
 - 14 Named in honour of Sir William Pepperrell (1696–1759), Massachusetts merchant, soldier, and slaveholder. An expedition he led in 1745 captured the French fortress of Louisbourg.
 - 15 The correct name is *Fishermen-Workers Tribune*. A weekly, the paper had been published since 1938 and was edited at the time of the 1941 Anglo-American agreement by O.L. Vardy.
 - 16 Named in honour of Major General James William McAndrew (1862–1922), a United States Army notable (information courtesy of the Edward Lake Argentia Archival Collection).
 - 17 Named in honour of United States military aviator Captain Ernest Emery Harmon (1893–1933).
 - 18 Major General John Bernard Brooks (1891–1975).
 - 19 On Merrymeeting Road. The USO building was later used by Memorial University.
 - 20 For this legislation, see <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/5-6/31/contents/enacted>.
 - 21 The road had many names to begin with but by 1950 was commonly known as the Northeast Arm Road (information courtesy of the Edward Lake Argentia Archival Collection).