

# THE “RACE OF HONOUR”:<sup>1</sup> AN ANALYSIS OF ENLISTMENTS AND CASUALTIES IN THE ARMED FORCES OF NEWFOUNDLAND: 1914-1918

CHRISTOPHER A. SHARPE

THE PATRIOTISM AND SACRIFICE of the men of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment during the First World War have fostered a quite deserved veneration among those of the province's inhabitants who care enough to remember such things. As always, however, when military endeavors of a bygone age are remembered, inaccuracies and misinterpretations confuse the picture. Without wishing to denigrate the memory of those who served, this paper re-examines the question of Newfoundland's mobilization of her manpower during the War, considering not only the Regiment, but other branches of service as well.

The history of Newfoundland's war effort continues to be explored, but the geography of that effort has never been examined. This paper makes an attempt to correct this deficiency. Using data compiled for the *Historical Atlas of Canada*, the regional pattern of enlistment in the different services is described, and some comments are made about the comparative magnitude of enlistment and casualties. In addition, the paper presents a graphic illustration of the impact of the war on the single community of St. John's.

A total of 8,707 Newfoundland men enlisted in three different services: the Newfoundland Regiment (granted the title Royal in 1917, and referred to hereafter as the RNR) which took in the majority; the Royal Naval Reserve

(RNRES); and the Newfoundland Forestry Corps (NFC).<sup>2</sup> The first section examines the validity of the popularity-held belief that levels of recruitment in Newfoundland were exceptionally high.<sup>3</sup>

In his recent history of Newfoundland, Rowe (375) says the war brought Newfoundland glory and grief. Both her volunteer and casualty rates are believed to have been the highest in the British Empire, although, in a footnote, he admits that "the same claim has been made for Australia".

The standard work on Newfoundland's military effort is Nicholson's *The Fighting Newfoundlander*. Here one finds the statement (439) that by 1918 more than 8000 Newfoundlanders had enlisted "...a greater enlistment per capita of population than any other country in the British empire, excluding only the United Kingdom".

A very generalized summary of enlistment rates in Newfoundland, Great Britain, Canada and several other Dominions is provided in Table 1 which

TABLE 1<sup>1</sup>

## Comparative Male Enlistment Rates

	Total Enlistment	Total (White) Male Population, 1911	Total Enlistment as a Percentage of Total (White) Male Population
Newfoundland	11,988 <sup>2</sup>	122,578	9.8
Canada	628,964 <sup>3</sup>	3,400,000 <sup>5</sup>	18.5
Australia <sup>4</sup>	412,953	2,470,000	16.7
New Zealand <sup>4</sup>	128,525 <sup>6</sup>	580,000	22.2
South Africa <sup>4</sup>	136,070 <sup>7</sup>	685,000	19.9
Great Britain	4,970,902	22,485,501 <sup>8</sup>	22.1
England	4,006,158	16,681,181	24.0
Wales	272,924	1,268,284	25.5
Scotland	557,618	2,351,843	23.7
Ireland	134,202	2,184,193	6.1

<sup>1</sup>Except where noted, the source for these data is *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire*. London, HMSO, 1922.

<sup>2</sup>Including enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (3296 men).

<sup>3</sup>Including known enlistments in British Forces.

<sup>4</sup>Including white troops only.

<sup>5</sup>To maintain comparability with the rest of the data, this total is used here, although the 1911 census gives the total male population as 3,821,067.

<sup>6</sup>Including enlistments in British forces. The New Zealand Expeditionary Force enlisted 117,715 men.

<sup>7</sup>Buchan.

<sup>8</sup>Estimated male population in 1914.

shows that, in fact, the overall rate of enlistment in Newfoundland was comparatively low, exceeding only that for Ireland. The basis for this comparison is total male population which is not very satisfactory, but data on the size of the *eligible* male population in these countries are not readily available. It is also the case that this table is based on one source, and some of the enlistment totals differ from those found in other sources. However, there are few places where one can find data permitting this sort of comparison, and they were used in spite of their obvious limitations.

TABLE 2

Enlistment Rates: Canada, Provinces, and Newfoundland 1914-1918

	<i>Eligible Population</i>	<i>Enlistment (males)<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Gross Enlistment (% of eligible)</i>
<b>CANADA</b>			
Canadian Expeditionary Force	1,726,873 <sup>2</sup>	607,072 <sup>3</sup>	35.2
Total Canadian Enlistment		651,037 <sup>4</sup>	37.7
<b>NEWFOUNDLAND</b>			
RNR only	33,708 <sup>5</sup>	6,241 <sup>7</sup>	18.5
All Newfoundland Forces <sup>6</sup>		8,707	25.8
Total Newfoundland Enlistment <sup>8</sup>		11,988	35.6

<sup>1</sup>From Public Archives of Canada, Department of Militia Files, RG 24, Files 1842 and 1892.

<sup>2</sup>From Census of Canada 1911. Unpublished Folio CXXVI, Table 4.

<sup>3</sup>This total includes 124,588 men conscripted under the Military Service Act of 1917.

<sup>4</sup>Including the CEF, the RCN, the Canadian Forestry Corps and British Forces.

<sup>5</sup>From Census of Newfoundland, 1911.

<sup>6</sup>Includes men in the RNR, RNRES, and NFC. From Government of Newfoundland, Report of the Militia Department, 1920.

<sup>7</sup>This total includes 1,573 men conscripted under the Military Service Act of April, 1918.

<sup>8</sup>Including 3296 Newfoundland-born men who enlisted in the CEF. Source: Public Archives of Canada, C.E.F. Personnel - Statistics, RG24. 10-47E. Corroborated by file HQ64-1-24. Vol.27. ff288.287.

A more detailed picture of enlistment in Canada, its provinces, and Newfoundland is presented in Table 2, which shows enlistment in all services, and in non-Canadian forces, as a percentage of the eligible population. The

most basic criteria determining eligibility were age and nationality. In Canada, the eligible population consisted of male citizens aged 18 to 45 years. In Newfoundland, the initial pool consisted of Newfoundland residents aged between 19 and 35 years.<sup>4</sup> The population of Newfoundland and Labrador in 1911 was 242,619, including 122,578 males. Of these, 33,708 were age-eligible for active military service according to the original restrictions. However, by 1916, it had been decided that the age of 30 should be established as the upper limit, "because it was considered appropriate to a sparse fishing population whose existence depended on a sufficient supply of able-bodied young men" (O'Brien, 121). In reality, then, the actual pool from which recruits could be drawn in Newfoundland was somewhat smaller than that used in the following calculations.

The Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) was the major Canadian military contribution. The Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) had a total enlistment of only 5123.<sup>5</sup> The number of Canadians serving in the Royal Flying Corps/Royal Naval Air Service/Royal Air Force is not known with certainty. The total Canadian enlistment in these various British flying services is usually given as 22,812.<sup>6</sup> Some of these men originally enlisted in the CEF and then transferred or were seconded. The 'official' number of such transfers is 3,960<sup>7</sup> although most authors would now agree that this greatly understates the true number.<sup>8</sup> The net enlistment in the flying services would thus be 18,842, and this total plus the enlistment in the RCN and the Canadian Forestry Corps has been added to the CEF enlistment in the table in an attempt to present a complete summary of Canadian enlistments. In the case of Newfoundland, the table shows the enlistment in the RNR, The RNRRES and the NFC, and also shows a final total which includes the 3,296 Newfoundlanders who enlisted in the CEF.<sup>9</sup>

In total, 11,988 Newfoundlanders are *known* to have enlisted in some military or paramilitary force. This total should be considered in the light of a statement made by the Colonial Secretary on 4 February 1915 (Nicholson, 1964:221). He estimated that using the then-accepted yardstick that 10 percent of a nation's total manpower would be capable of bearing arms, Newfoundland's maximum contribution would be in the order of 24,000 men. However, he said, Newfoundland's circumstances required that these same men be available for the fishery — the source of the country's livelihood — and the number who could be spared would be a relatively small proportion of that. The actual number of Newfoundlanders *accepted* for service equalled half of the Colonial Secretary's estimated maximum: hardly a relatively small proportion.

In spite of the crudeness of some of these data, it is apparent that the claim of an extraordinarily high rate of enlistment among Newfoundlanders is without substance if compared with other countries. Nonetheless, the rate

was certainly not out of line when considered in the context of the Canadian response, since the gross Canadian rate was only marginally higher than that for Newfoundland. But it must be borne in mind that the 'gross' Canadian enlistment rate given in the table understates the true rate, since it is based on the total number of age-eligible men. A portion of this group, consisting of foreign-born aliens, was ineligible for military service. The 'true' enlistment rate for the CEF was 39.6 percent, and the provincial rates ranged from a low of 23.3 percent in Quebec to a high of 61.0 percent in Manitoba.<sup>10</sup> The total 'all service' rate, based on the revised number of eligible men was 41.1 percent.

In many parts of Canada, and certainly in Quebec, the war was viewed as an Imperial, or perhaps even a British war, and it is no surprise that a very large proportion of the members of the Canadian force were British-born. It would seem then, to be a reasonable expectation that provinces with a large British-born male population would have had a higher rate of enlistment than, for example, the Prairies, where the population included a large number of foreign-born aliens. However, this is not generally true.<sup>11</sup> In any case, the question of a strong response among British-born men is not relevant to Newfoundland. A total of 98.6 percent of the population was Newfoundland-born in 1911. Only 1.1 percent was British-born, and a miniscule 0.3 percent foreign-born. If one assumes that in the context of the times, ignoring the whole question of gainful employment in necessary occupations and war industry, very high rates of enlistment should be expected only among British-born men, then an interesting suggestion can be made. The *total* Newfoundland enlistment rate was 35.6 percent of the eligible population — a population made up, as we have seen, almost entirely of native-born men. If one examines the data for Canada (CEF only) one finds that only 28.6 percent of the Canadian-born eligible men enlisted in the CEF.<sup>12</sup> The total all-service enlistment among Canadian-born men cannot be calculated because of the absence of the requisite data, but the percentage would not likely be much larger. It would appear, then, that the overall enlistment rate among native-born Newfoundlanders was considerably higher than that prevailing among native-born Canadians.

One of the sources of the misconception about the relative magnitude of the rates of enlistment in Newfoundland was probably the figures issued by the Newfoundland Government. The government computed and published rates based on all those who offered themselves for enlistment, not just those who were accepted for active service. When cast as a percentage of the eligible population, the results are certainly impressive (Table 3). These data show that 26.6 percent of the eligible men in the colony voluntarily presented themselves for service *in the RNR alone*. An additional 10.8 percent were made available through "conscription". In total, 37 percent of the province's eligi-

ble men presented themselves for service. What is also striking, even startling, is that nearly half of the would-be volunteers, and more than half of the conscripts, were found to be medically unfit for service.

TABLE 3

Enlistments: Royal Newfoundland Regiment (All ranks)<sup>1</sup>

	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>% of Eligible Population</i>
<b>VOLUNTEERS<sup>2</sup></b>			
Total offered for service	8,832	100.0	26.2
Total rejected-medically unfit	4,128	46.7	12.2
Total accepted	4,704	53.3	14.0
<b>CONSCRIPTS</b>			
Total	3,629	100.0	10.8
Rejected	2,056	56.7	6.1
Accepted	1,573	43.3	4.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,461</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>37.0</b>
Rejected	6,184	49.6	18.3
Accepted	6,277	50.4	18.6
<b>TOTAL EMBARKED FOR OVERSEAS</b>	<b>4,984</b>	<b>49.4</b>	<b>14.8</b>

<sup>1</sup>*Report of the Department of Militia, 1919* and, *Report of the Department of Militia, 1920*.

<sup>2</sup>Up to 30 April, 1918. This total understates the 'official' number since 'volunteers' were accepted up to 24 May, 1918, although the Military Service Act was passed, and received Royal Assent on 11 May, 1918.

The specific reasons for rejection in each case are not known, and perhaps it is unnecessary to have them in any case. It is clear, however, that the rate of rejection was very high in Newfoundland as it was elsewhere. Comparable statistics for the CEF are unavailable, but there is evidence that British recruiters faced similar problems, and height standards, among other things, were reduced from 5 feet 8 inches in 1914 to 5 feet 3 inches by 1915 to obviate the necessity of turning away an excessive number of potential recruits. In this context, it is interesting to note that the minimum standards required of potential Regimental recruits in Newfoundland were a height of 5 feet

3 inches, an average chest measurement of 34 inches and a weight of 120 pounds (Nicholson, 1964:199). The social significance of this relaxing of physical requirements has been explored by John Terraine who says that as a result of the enormous demand for manpower, and Lord Kitchener's famous call:

One may say that for the first time the British Army met the British people, and in so doing, introduced Britain herself to her people. The shock was considerable; the image of a sturdy, strapping population (by comparison with weedy foreigners) was rudely dispelled when the results of callous nineteenth-century industrial expansion flocked into view. Robust enough in spirit, the men of the narrow streets of the industrial towns, offspring of long working hours, low wages, persistent poverty and persistent malnutrition, simply did not meet the physical standards laid down by a small professional army which could normally pick and choose its recruits. When conscription came, the same applied, and in the later stages of the war many noted the contrast between the small British soldiers from the cities, the tall, powerful frames of the Dominion troops and even the hefty appearance of the French, digging deep into their reserves of tough peasantry.

Speaking specifically of the 35th "Bantam Division", comprised of men who could only stretch to 5 feet 2 inches, Terraine says (41) "particular modes of suffering and sorrow are concealed behind the bald statistics of recruiting height". He quotes the war correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* who said that all these men had a common trait, in that they were "the dwarfed children of industrial England and its mid-Victorian cruelties". Newfoundlanders were not suffering from the ravages of an urban industrial society, but the high rejection rates obviously reflect other types of problems which would be worthy of investigation in their own right.

## CASUALTIES

While the rate of enlistment in Newfoundland was not exceptionally high, the belief that its land forces suffered an exceptionally high number of casualties when compared with Canada's is clearly supported by the evidence (Table 10). The total number of fatalities suffered by the overseas contingent of the Newfoundland forces was considerably higher than rates for Canada and the other 'British' countries for which comparable rates can be calculated (Table 4). The Canadian fatality rate as a percentage of the total number of men overseas in *all* services cannot be calculated because, as noted earlier, the total size of the overseas 'contingent' of Canadians is not known with certainty. A generalized overview, however, indicates that the Canadian overseas force as a percentage of total enlistment, was low, making the fatality statistics all the more sobering (Table 4).

An examination of published overall casualty figures makes it apparent that a wide diversity exists among the various national rates (Table 5). The

TABLE 4

Comparative Fatality Rates<sup>1</sup>

	Number Sent Overseas	Fatalities		% of Overseas Force	% of Enlistment <sup>2</sup>
		% of Total Enlistment	Number		
Australia	331,781	80.3	59,330	17.9	14.4
Canada	422,405	67.2	59,544 <sup>3</sup>	14.1	10.5
New Zealand	98,950	77.0	16,711	16.9	13.0
South Africa	58,605 <sup>4</sup>	43.1	7,121	12.2	5.2
Newfoundland	5,046 <sup>5</sup>	79.8	1,281 <sup>6</sup>	25.4	20.3 <sup>6</sup>
Great Britain <sup>7</sup>	NA	NA	702,410	NA	14.1

<sup>1</sup>*Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire*. Part IV, Section 1, p. 237. Like all such tabulations, this one is subject to error, and some of the individual totals may be open to dispute. However, it is presented here in an attempt to provide a reasonably accurate comparative overview, and the level of accuracy is sufficient to permit this.

<sup>2</sup>Including enlistment in British forces where applicable. Fatalities among those serving in the CEF totalled 59,544.

<sup>3</sup>CEF only. If one were to include the deaths of Canadians serving in British forces up to 20 April 1922, the total is 66,651. PAC RG 24 F16 1819, 4-126, 'Book of Remembrance'.

<sup>4</sup>White troops only, excluding 76,462 white troops who served in the German South West Africa Campaign. The total number of men engaged in all theatres, including 'colonial' troops was 228,907, of which 110,013 served in the South West Africa theatre.

<sup>5</sup>Including 62 Newfoundlanders recruited in the U.K.

<sup>6</sup>Royal Newfoundland Regiment only.

<sup>7</sup>Mansergh (191) indicates that 6,704,416 men enlisted in the British Isles, without asserting that they were all British citizens, and that 704,803 lost their lives. The fatality rate would then be 10.5 percent of enlistment.

highest rate for an entire overseas contingent (63.7 percent) is that for Australia.<sup>13</sup> The Newfoundland rate (50.7 percent) is well below both this, and the rate in the CEF (55.7 percent), although the rate for the RNR alone as calculated from this particular data base is 70.7 percent.

With some justification, it can be argued that a comparison of 'Army' casualty rates of Canada and Newfoundland is misleading, since it is between a battalion (the RNR) and an entire Corps (the CEF). The obvious difficulty is that a Corps-wide casualty rate hides wide variations in specific battalion rates. To serve as the basis for a more detailed, and perhaps more realistic evaluation, Table 6 presents some comparable battalion-specific casualty rates for units within the CEF. The rates are calculated on the basis of the total number of men on the nominal roll, to ensure a uniform base of comparison, even though some of these men may not have served at the front. An



examination of these data show clearly that while Newfoundland as a whole suffered a higher infantry fatality rate than Canada (Table 5), a comparison of rates of loss in locally-recruited units of approximately the same size shows that many communities or areas in Canada suffered more heavily than Newfoundland, in terms of both fatal and non-fatal casualties.

TABLE 5

Comparative Total Casualty Rates<sup>1</sup>

	<i>Total Casualties<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>% of Overseas Force</i>	<i>% of Enlistment</i>
Australia	211,501	63.7	51.2
Canada <sup>4</sup>	235,385 <sup>3</sup>	55.7	42.0
New Zealand	58,028	58.6	45.1
South Africa	19,150	32.7	14.0
Great Britain	2,365,035	NA <sup>5</sup>	47.6
Newfoundland			
Total	3,895	50.7 <sup>6</sup>	43.2
RNR only	3,565	70.7	56.7

<sup>1</sup>*Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire*, unless otherwise noted (See Table 4, Note 1).

<sup>2</sup>Including killed and wounded. It is very important to note that here, as in all British data on casualties, "wounded" means "number of wound casualties", *not* "number of individual wounded". An unknown, but probably considerable amount of double, or multiple counting is undoubtedly involved.

<sup>3</sup>Adam-Smith Appendix II, Table 3, indicates 215,585 as the total number of Australian casualties. However, all the estimates in this source seem inflated.

<sup>4</sup>Canadian Expeditionary Force only. Source PAC RG24, File 1844, no. 11-10.

<sup>5</sup>Despite an exhaustive search, no reliable data on the total size of the British Overseas Expeditionary Force have been found.

<sup>6</sup>Excluding Newfoundlanders serving in the CEF.

The most obvious conclusion that one can come to on the basis of the above examination is that any generalized statement about one country's or region's contribution to a common war effort, relative to some others, should be avoided. The bases for comparison are very tenuous, and changes in the base on which rates of loss are calculated can lead to very significant differences in the results.

TABLE 6  
Casualty Rates:  
Selected Canadian Battalions and the Royal Nfld. Regiment

	<i>Nominal</i>		<i>Casualties</i>	
	<i>Roll</i>	<i>Fatal</i>	<i>Non-Fatal</i>	<i>Total</i>
Royal Newfoundland Regiment <sup>1</sup>	6,241	1,281 (20.5)	2,284 (36.6)	3,565 (57.1)
2nd Battalion (Eastern Ontario) <sup>2</sup>	5,326	1,279 (24.0)	2,024 (38.0)	3,303 (62.0)
13th Battalion (Royal Highlanders) <sup>3</sup>	5,560	1,291 (23.2)	3,154 (56.7)	4,445 (79.9)
14th Battalion (Royal Montreal) <sup>4</sup>	6,270	1,192 (19.1)	3,277 (52.5)	4,469 (71.6)
16th Battalion (Canadian Scottish) <sup>5</sup>	5,491	1,412 (25.7)	3,292 (60.0)	4,846 (88.3)
24th Battalion (Victoria Rifles) <sup>6</sup>	4,827	1,006 (20.8)	2,385 (49.4)	3,369 (69.8)
42nd Battalion (Royal Highlanders) <sup>7</sup>	4,032	911 (22.6)	2,322 (57.6)	3,233 (80.2)
46th Battalion (South Saskatchewan) <sup>8</sup>	5,374	1,433 (26.7)	3,484 (64.8)	4,917 (91.5)
49th Battalion (Loyal Edmonton) <sup>9</sup>	4,050	977 (24.1)	2,282 (56.3)	3,259 (80.5)
72nd Battalion (Seaforth Highlanders) <sup>10</sup>	3,791	633 (16.7)	1,882 (49.6)	2,575 (66.3)
77th Battalion (Ottawa) <sup>11</sup>	1,368	337 (23.7)	533 (39.0)	899 (65.7)
Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry <sup>12</sup>	5,086	1,300 (25.6)	2,776 (54.6)	4,076 (80.1)

NB The choice of battalions for inclusion in this table was dictated by the availability of Battalion histories with complete nominal rolls in the libraries of Memorial University of Newfoundland, Trent University and the University of Toronto. Other battalion casualty rates may have been different.

<sup>1</sup>Reports of the Militia Department, 1919-1920.

<sup>2</sup>Murray.

<sup>3</sup>Fetherstonhaugh, (1925).

<sup>4</sup>Fetherstonhaugh, (1927).

<sup>5</sup>Urquhart.

<sup>6</sup>Fetherstonhaugh, (1930).

<sup>7</sup>Topp.

<sup>8</sup>McWilliams and Steele.

<sup>9</sup>Stevens.

<sup>10</sup>McEvoy.

<sup>11</sup>*An Historical Sketch of the 77th Battalion CEF.*

<sup>12</sup>Hodder-Williams.

## REGIONAL PATTERNS OF ENLISTMENT IN NEWFOUNDLAND

Much has been written describing and analyzing Newfoundland's contribution to the Allied cause during the Great War. However, there has never been a discussion of the regional patterns of enlistment, or other aspects of the intra-colonial geography of manpower mobilization based on an analysis of the complete set of primary sources.<sup>14</sup> In this section an overview of these patterns will be presented and the more obvious anomalies pointed out.

Enlistment patterns have been computed largely on the basis of the eighteen electoral districts which existed at the time of the war. The exceptions are St. John's East and West, which have been combined to provide an estimate, albeit somewhat inflated, of the capital city's contribution,<sup>15</sup> and Labrador which has been treated separately. Eligible men made up between 23 and 30 percent of the total male population in these districts, with a mean of 27 percent.

The Newfoundland Regiment<sup>16</sup> was the largest of the three services which recruited in the colony. The first recruits to the Regiment were the "Blue Puttees", the 546 men of A and B Companies who embarked at St. John's on 3 October, 1914, a scant eight weeks after the start of hostilities.<sup>17</sup> These companies were comprised in large part (80 percent), of men from St. John's, the majority of them having been members of one of the four Church-sponsored paramilitary cadet corps.<sup>18</sup> The preponderance of St. John's men in this group is due most probably to the rapidity of the mobilization and the concentration of the members of these brigades in the capital city. Approximately two-thirds of the first wave of accepted recruits had seen previous service in city brigades (O'Brien, 7).<sup>19</sup> A retrospective look indicates that the 437 St. John's men of the First Contingent made up 9.4 percent of the total number of combatants who served in the Regiment.

The first contingent to go overseas was a large group comprising two companies. Subsequent to its embarkation, five single-company drafts averaging 250 men were embarked, followed by the men of H Company who went overseas in two groups. These men comprised the bulk of the original First Battalion. Subsequent reinforcements were sent in groups of approximately 100, and without company affiliation. It is important to note that the predominance of men from St. John's as evident in the first two companies was reduced in subsequent companies to 69, 56, 42, 29, 28 and 30 percent.

A total of 4,591 men who volunteered prior to the introduction of the Military Service Act of 11 May, 1918, were accepted for service (Table 7). Initially, as we have seen, the townsmen made up a disproportionate percentage of the numbers and comprised 52.1 percent of the total enlistment.

The flow of men from the outports began to pick up only later in the war, and it is important that the probable reason for this be outlined.

The physical, economic and human geography of the colony militated against a uniform pattern of enlistment. St. John's, in 1911, had a population of 45,685: 18.8 percent of the total. The bulk of its residents were no longer directly dependent on the fishery, and nearly half of the labor force was engaged in trade and manufacturing. However, unemployment and poor wages were a chronic problem, which was exacerbated by a large and continuing flow of migrants from the outports to St. John's. Outside of the capital the only relatively large centres were the iron-mining community on Bell Island and the lumbering area of central Newfoundland, focused on the new company towns of Grand Falls and Bishops Falls. The rest of the population was distributed among approximately 1,300 small communities, most of them sheltering well under 1,000 souls, and scattered along 6,000 miles of coastline. The only sizeable settlements were the old mercantile centre of Harbour Grace (4,000); the fishing service centres of Bonavista, Carbonear and Twillingate, with roughly 3,000 people each; and Burin and Bay Roberts, which had populations of around 2,000. These, and the other smaller outports were isolated in space and highly individualistic in outlook. They were linked to the capital and each other only by an inadequate postal telegraph service and 36 members of the House of Assembly (O'Brien, 18). The main physical connections were the railway, which clearly had a limited spatial impact, and the coastal boat network.

The economy of the island was controlled largely by St. John's merchants through a system of credit. There was, consequently, a strong undercurrent of resentment against the capital and all it stood for, a resentment increased by the dearth of administrative services in the outports and the lack of local government. The churches were important because they controlled the education system, and formed the basis of most forms of social organization. However, both church and lay leaders were concentrated in St. John's, and were identified as belonging to the capital, so that the great influence of the Church contributed to the feeling of alienation and neglect in the outports.

O'Brien says (90) that "perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of the Newfoundland Regiment was the extent to which it was identified with St. John's". This was true to some extent of the composition of the 'other ranks', and most certainly of the officers. Given the antipathy of much of the island to St. John's, it would not be surprising to find a reluctance to enlist. The demands of the fishery and the health of the industry during the war years was also a factor, since it provided a strong attraction to remain at work, at home (Noel, 129). This would have been particularly true in Twillingate, Fogo, Bonavista and Trinity Bays, which were solidly committed to the traditional fishing industry, and sullenly hostile to St. John's; Ferry-

TABLE 7

## Enlistment in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment

	<i>Total Voluntary Enlistment<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Enlistment Under the Military Service Act<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Total Enlistment</i>	<i>Total Enlistment As % of Eligible Population</i>
St. Barbe	216 ( 4.6)	16 ( 1.1)	228 ( 3.8)	15.0
Twillingate	577 (12.6)	194 (13.2)	771 (12.7)	22.4
Fogo	132 ( 2.9)	78 ( 5.3)	210 ( 3.5)	15.9
Bonavista Bay	330 ( 7.2)	230 (15.7)	560 ( 9.2)	17.2
Trinity Bay	428 ( 9.3)	156 (10.6)	584 ( 9.6)	19.2
Bay de Verde	61 ( 1.3)	41 ( 2.8)	102 ( 1.7)	7.2
Carbonear	30 ( 0.7)	10 ( 0.7)	40 ( 0.7)	5.9
Harbour Grace	159 ( 3.5)	58 ( 4.0)	217 ( 3.6)	13.7
Port de Grave	55 ( 1.2)	32 ( 2.2)	87 ( 1.4)	9.7
Harbour Main	137 ( 3.0)	40 ( 2.7)	177 ( 2.9)	13.4
St. John's	1,640 (35.7)	136 ( 9.3)	1,776 (29.3)	29.2
Ferryland	46 ( 1.0)	35 ( 2.4)	81 ( 1.3)	11.9
Placentia-St. Mary's	185 ( 4.0)	110 ( 7.5)	295 ( 4.9)	13.0
Burin	171 ( 3.7)	66 ( 4.5)	237 ( 3.9)	15.9
Fortune Bay	98 ( 2.1)	120 ( 8.2)	218 ( 3.6)	15.1
Burgeo - La Poile	100 ( 2.2)	51 ( 3.5)	151 ( 2.5)	13.8
St. Georges	198 ( 4.3)	83 ( 5.7)	281 ( 4.6)	17.5
Labrador	32 ( 0.7)	14 ( 1.0)	46 ( 0.8)	8.5
TOTAL	4,595	1,470	6,061	18.0

<sup>1</sup>Column percentages are shown in brackets.

<sup>2</sup>Enacted on May 11, 1918.

land and Placentia which were heavily involved in the inshore fishery; and Burin, Fortune Bay and Burgeo — La Poile which were engaged in the off-shore Banks fishing and uniquely pursued a winter inshore cod fishery. This is not to say, however, that the outports did not contribute to the military side of the war effort for, as we shall see, naval enlistments far outweighed those for the army in many areas, and were not inconsequential. There were administrative and political reasons for the low enlistment rates. The Newfoundland Patriotic Association, whose activities are analyzed by O'Brien, was essentially a St. John's organization. Even when recruitment tours to the outports were organized, the results were poor. Three tours were completed, and plans for a fourth, and possibly a fifth were shelved in the wake of a calamitous southwest coast expedition in 1915. These tours were never a serious programme. Perhaps the NPA was "lulled into a false sense of ease

by St. John's-area enlistments at the beginning , [and, as a result,] the NPA made few attempts to secure recruits from outlying districts" (110).

The southwest coast tour [in the spring of 1915] had a decidedly sobering effect on the government and politicians in St. John's. It convinced them, rightly or wrongly, that persuading Newfoundlanders beyond the immediate vicinity of the capital to leave their homes and families for far off European battlefields was a thankless task. Consequently ... MHA's removed themselves as far as possible from outport recruiting campaigns, and chose to rely on the voluntary efforts of the NPA, outport clergymen and magistrates instead.

The major reasons for the wide discrepancy in district enlistment rates thus appear to have been the varying influence and degree of commitment of local leaders, especially the lack of effort by outport MHA's (O'Brien, 305); the degree of isolation; the importance of the fishery, religion,<sup>20</sup> and the attitude of employers. Some of the latter actively promoted enlistment. Some St. John's firms, for example, promised to hold open the positions of men who enlisted, and some even agreed to make up the difference in pay. Some government civil servants were offered the same inducement. In Grand Falls, the Anglo-Newfoundland Development (AND) Company, faced by mid-1915 with the necessity of reducing their labor force because of shipping shortages and British import restrictions, also agreed to make up differences in pay for men who enlisted in the Reserve Force, as they had done for men in the First Battalion. Such local factors clearly contributed to variations in enlistment rates.

It must also be pointed out that the initial term of enlistment made it difficult, and in most cases impossible, for an outport man to join the Regiment and complete the initial period of training. In the beginning, recruits were given no pay or allowances until they went overseas. However, they were required to present themselves for training in St. John's three nights a week. It is hardly surprising, then, that the vast majority of the initial group of recruits came from St. John's and the immediate vicinity. By December 1914, the Government had succumbed to mounting pressures from a variety of sources, and approved new conditions. Initially 500 men were to be placed on pay as soon as they had been found medically fit. They would then train steadily until embarkation. These improved terms soon began to show more hopeful results (Nicholson, 1964: 198).

In Newfoundland, as in Canada, there was a strong commitment to the idea that the war would be won on the land, and that the troops raised in the Dominions to assist in that victory should serve in units clearly identified with the homeland. In Canada's case this led to the creation of the Canadian Corps; in Newfoundland, to the creation of a full sized Battalion, requiring a line strength of 1,080 officers and men. Raising such units presented one set of problems; maintaining them at combat strength, (i.e. battalion

strength plus the necessary 50 percent reserve) created another. In the case of both North American dominions, national pride was maintained by the successful defence of the integrity of the respective field force, but only through the imposition of conscription. The story of the conscription issue need not be retold here.<sup>21</sup> It is sufficient for the present purpose to note that the Military Service Act (MSA) was passed on 11 May 1918. This occurred shortly after the receipt of a telegram from the British Army Council stating that the Regiment was short of its authorized war establishment by 170 men, and that there were insufficient reserve troops in training at the depot in Ayr to make up the deficit. A draft of 300 men was required immediately and an additional 60 per month would be required to maintain it in the field (Nicholson, 1964:438). Because of the manpower situation, the Regiment had been withdrawn from the front line. Recruiting was at a low ebb in the colony, in part because of the understandable reluctance of young men to volunteer themselves for service in a war which was by now known to be inordinately bloody. In addition, it must be borne in mind that the colony was, by this time, running out of eligible men who were available for active service.<sup>22</sup>

Only one class of men numbering 3,629 (aged 19 to 25) was called up and ordered to register or apply for exemption before 24 May 1918. In time, 1,573 of these men were found to be fit for active duty (Table 3). The first group crossed to Britain in September 1918 for training, and were still so engaged at the time of the Armistice (Nicholson, 1964:439). Thus, all the MSA recruits remained non-combatants, and have been kept separate from the volunteers in Table 7.

Controversy continues about the Military Service Act. O'Brien (320 ff) asserts that the data have been misinterpreted by all other researchers, and that none of the men who enlisted after 24 May 1918, were conscripts.

She says (329) "the status of the roughly 1,000 men whose names appear on the rolls of the Regiment after 24 May 1918 is ambiguous. While these men may not have been volunteers in the truest sense, neither were they conscripts. Their standing lies somewhere between the two". Her examination of the relevant documents shows that all the men who had registered for service were initially ordered to report on 1 September 1918; that, in light of a sufficient reserve on hand at the Depot, a further leave of absence without pay was granted until 15 October; and then because of an outbreak of influenza, a further leave of absence was granted until 15 November. If she is correct, and Nicholson, Noel and Rowe wrong, then no men raised by the Act ever left Newfoundland. A final resolution of the question would only be forthcoming after a search of the individual service records of all 1,573 men who were accepted for service after 24 May 1918.

In retrospect, we can see that the Newfoundland and Canadian situations

are identical in that conscription was necessary in neither case. In an attempt to obviate the need for conscription in Newfoundland, a major recruiting effort was launched in April by various groups, especially The Returned Soldiers and Rejected Volunteers Association. By the end of the month 725 men (402 of whom would eventually be rejected) had enlisted, the best monthly figure since the beginning of 1915.<sup>23</sup> We now know that these men were sufficient to ensure the future of the Regiment, because of when the Armistice occurred. Clearly, neither this, nor the rate of casualties which was to be sustained in the interim, was known at the time.

## THE ROYAL NAVAL RESERVE

In 1870 the British garrison was withdrawn from Newfoundland. The colony was thereafter without an organized military force until 1902, when the Newfoundland government agreed to set £ 3,000 per annum towards the support of a local branch of the RN Reserve with a total strength of 600 men (Noel, 120). The men of the Naval Reserve were paid by the British government. To facilitate training the cruiser *Calypso* (later renamed *Briton*), staffed by regular RN personnel, was stationed in St. John's harbour to serve as headquarters for the Reserve. The reservists were required to undergo twenty-eight days of training per year, and could, if a Royal Proclamation was issued, be called on to serve in the Navy for six years. This was an attractive scheme for those who met the enlistment criteria. No matter where they lived, their travelling expenses to St. John's were paid, and during the 28 day training period they were given regular pay. At the end of the period, they received a bonus of £ 6, the equivalent of a month's wages in most occupations prior to 1914 (Rowe, 370). At the outbreak of war, the Reserve was at its full nominal strength of 600 men and its mobilization was the government's first active response. The origins of these men are shown in Table 8, which differentiates between the pre-war reservists, who were called to active duty by Royal Proclamation, and those who enlisted later. When the pre-war force was mobilized, all but 70 of the men were away at the fishery. Eventually, 518 of them answered the call. Those who did not were discharged from the books.<sup>24</sup> Undaunted by the initial difficulty involved in actually mobilizing the reservists, the government immediately telegraphed London with a pledge to bring the active strength up to 1,000 men by the end of October.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike the Regiment, the Naval Reserve was regarded mainly as an out-port force, to the extent that it was considered at all. The Reservists were integrated into the Royal Navy's regular units and dispersed throughout hundreds of vessels. As a result, there was no opportunity for them to make a name for themselves as a group (Rowe, 375; *Times History of the War*,



TABLE 8

Enlistment in the Royal Naval Reserve  
and the Newfoundland Forestry Corps

	Royal Naval Reserve			N.F.C.
	Pre-War Reservists <sup>1</sup>	War Time Enlistment	Total	
St. Barbe	20 ( 3.9) <sup>2</sup>	102 ( 7.0)	122 ( 6.2)	24 ( 4.9)
Twillingate	15 ( 2.9)	102 ( 7.0)	117 ( 5.0)	129 (26.1)
Fogo	27 ( 5.2)	47 ( 3.2)	74 ( 3.8)	17 ( 3.4)
Bonavista Bay	86 (16.6)	139 ( 9.5)	225 (11.4)	23 ( 4.7)
Trinity Bay	107 (20.7)	232 (15.8)	339 (17.2)	41 ( 8.3)
Bay de Verde	1 ( 0.2)	18 ( 1.2)	19 ( 1.0)	7 ( 1.4)
Carbonear	2 ( 0.4)	26 ( 1.8)	28 ( 1.4)	—
Harbour Grace	45 ( 8.7)	84 ( 5.8)	129 ( 6.7)	11 ( 2.2)
Port de Grave	38 ( 7.3)	72 ( 4.9)	110 ( 5.6)	1 ( 0.2)
Harbour Main	12 ( 2.3)	40 ( 2.7)	52 ( 2.6)	17 ( 3.5)
St. John's	89 (17.2)	247 (16.9)	336 (17.1)	167 (33.8)
Ferryland	3 ( 0.6)	12 ( 0.8)	15 ( 0.8)	4 ( 0.8)
Placentia-St. Mary's	49 ( 9.5)	113 ( 7.8)	162 ( 8.2)	7 ( 1.4)
Burin	—	23 ( 1.6)	23 ( 1.2)	5 ( 1.0)
Fortune Bay	4 ( 0.8)	29 ( 2.0)	33 ( 1.7)	6 ( 1.2)
Burgeo - La Poile	2 ( 0.4)	20 ( 1.4)	22 ( 1.1)	2 ( 0.4)
St. Georges	8 ( 1.5)	144 ( 9.8)	152 ( 7.7)	29 ( 5.9)
Labrador	—	8 ( 0.5)	8 ( 0.4)	—
Home District				
Unknown	10 ( 1.9)			4 ( 0.8)
TOTAL	518 (100.1)	1,458 (99.7)	1,966 <sup>3</sup> (99.1)	494

<sup>1</sup>The nominal strength of the Reserve at the outbreak of the War was 600 men, and it was apparently up to strength. These 518 men are those who answered the call to active duty. Those who did not were struck off strength. *Evening Telegram*, 13 March 1916.

<sup>2</sup>Percentage of the total enlistment.

<sup>3</sup>*The Times History of the War*, Vol. 14 (p.18) indicates that "no fewer than 3,663 men offered themselves between the outbreak of war and the spring of 1917 for active service in the Navy". No source is given for this number, and it cannot be confirmed.

Vol. 14, p. 186). This was unfortunate. Since local pride was involved only to a minor degree, the people of St. John's and their leaders were little interested in their welfare or fate. It was argued at the time that the Reserve was the most appropriate channel through which Newfoundland could contribute to the common cause, given the obvious aptitude of the colony's

seafaring population (O'Brien, 101). Indeed, in another context, Winston Churchill was to remark that Newfoundlanders were the finest small boat men in the world (quoted in Rowe, 376). In addition, the cost to Newfoundland of the Reserve was minimal. However, the prevailing mood of the day was clearly that the war would be won on land, and once the British government had accepted the offer of 500 Newfoundland soldiers, the die was cast.<sup>26</sup> There was, in the end, a significant contribution to the ranks of the Royal Navy, primarily from the Bonavista, Trinity and Conception Bay areas, plus a not insignificant cohort from St. John's (despite the fact that only seamen and fishermen were eligible after October, 1914) but the Reserve has remained "the silent force".

## THE NEWFOUNDLAND FORESTRY CORPS

By the time the war was only a year old, a serious shortage of timber had arisen in Britain, at least partly as a result of the damage inflicted by German U-Boats on the British merchant fleet. The problem was exacerbated by a shortage of skilled woodsmen, and in the first instance help was sought in this regard from Canada. In response to a request from the Government, the first Canadian Forestry Battalion went overseas in the early summer of 1916, as the vanguard of a specialized force that would eventually number some 22,000 men. In March 1917, when Premier Morris was in Britain, he received a similar request, and the Patriotic Association responded immediately with an offer "to raise 500 or more woodsmen and miners to form a Pioneer Battalion of The Newfoundland Regiment", for employment anywhere but in a tropical climate (Nicholson, 1964: 468). The British Government indicated that the need was for skilled loggers and sawmill hands, and the decision was made to form five 100-man companies as a separate force to be known as the Newfoundland Forestry Corps. This would be a non-combat unit, although the rate of pay was to be the same as for that prevailing in the Regiment, with an additional bonus for skilled men. The British government bore all the costs of raising and maintaining the force, from the date of enlistment until the return of the men to Newfoundland.

The spatial distribution of enlistment in the Corps is detailed in Table 8. A total of 494 men were enlisted, all of whom were, for one reason or another, ineligible for either enlistment or further service in the Regiment or the Naval Reserve (*Times History of the War*, Vol. 14: p. 212). They either enlisted in response to advertisements in the daily press, or were recruited through the efforts of a Forestry Commission established by the NPA to assume responsibility for recruitment. Among the members of the Committee were the general managers of the two big Newfoundland mills, the AND Company in Grand Falls, and the A.E. Reed Company of Bishop Falls. Both

men took a leading role in recruiting within their own mills, and this may help to explain why a large proportion (26.3 percent) of the men of the Corps came from the Twillingate District. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the Director of Timber Supplies for the British Government was himself a Director of the AND Company (Nicholson, 1964: p.468).

The first 99 men left St. John's on 19 May 1917, complete with tools. A second draft of 170 left early in July and smaller groups travelled to the area of operations in Scotland at irregular intervals thereafter. The Newfoundlanders earned quite a reputation for themselves as a result of their successful harvesting of 1,200 steeply sloping acres of timberland on the estate of the Duke of Atholl. The precipitous nature of the terrain had deterred any previous attempts to harvest the magnificent century-old trees. They subsequently made a serious dent in an equally inaccessible 800 acre forest belonging to the Marquis of Breadalbane (Nicholson, 1964: 469 ff).

## CASUALTY RATES

It is not always the case that the number of fatal casualties suffered by a country or region is in proportion to the size of the enlistment. The First War, perhaps more than any other, caused peculiar patterns of casualties. Data have been consolidated in Table 9 to allow for a comparison between each district's enlistments and fatal casualties.<sup>27</sup> The data in Table 9 show fatalities, by service, as a percentage of enlistment, and here too one can see the variations that result from the vagaries of war. When one considers that the majority of the men enlisting in the active services were young, and remembers that the data being considered here relate to *fatal* casualties only, then the significance of these rates, which range from 13.1 percent among men from Fortune Bay to 26.5 percent among those from Carbonear can be better appreciated. The long-term effect of the loss of so many of the various districts' young men, compounded by the debilitating effects of the unknown number of non-fatal wounds, and injuries and disease, can only be guessed at, but was obviously substantial.

The wastage of young men during the senseless slaughter of the First War was enormous on both sides of the conflict. The casualty rate, because of the nature of the fighting, was, in many instances, very much higher in the First than in the Second War, and was borne by a smaller population base. The comparative data for Canada and Newfoundland given in Table 10 show that the First War army casualties alone are greater than the all-service casualty total for the Second War. In fact, the number of First War *fatalities* in both the CEF and the RNR exceeds the total number of all types of Second War *casualties*, both fatal and non-fatal.

TABLE 9  
Fatal Casualties, and Fatality Rates  
by District and Service<sup>1</sup>

	<i>Royal Newfoundland Regiment</i>		<i>Royal Naval Reserve</i>		<i>Mercantile Marine</i>	
	<i>Fatal Casualties</i>	<i>Fatalities as % of Enlistment<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Fatal Casualties</i>	<i>Fatalities as % of Enlistment</i>	<i>Fatal Casualties</i>	<i>Fatalities as % of Enlistment</i>
St. Barbe	46	21.7	4	3.9	1	100.0
Twillingate	162	28.1	7	6.9	8	72.7
Fogo	40	30.3	11	14.9	3	25.0
Bonavista Bay	107	32.4	15	10.8	1	20.0
Trinity Bay	126	29.4	29	12.5	7	38.9
Bay de Verde	19	31.2	4	21.1	2	100.0
Carbonear	8	26.7	1	3.6	9	16.1
Harbour Grace	43	27.0	10	7.8	4	28.6
Port de Grave	21	38.2	13	11.8	0	0
Harbour Main	31	22.6	5	9.6	2	66.7
St. John's	425	25.9	37	15.0	43	14.8
Ferryland	18	39.1	2	13.3	1	20.0
Placentia-						
St. Mary's	58	31.4	10	6.2	3	42.9
Burin	57	33.3	4	17.4	3	20.0
Fortune Bay	30	30.6	1	3.4	1	20.0

TABLE 9 (continued)  
Fatal Casualties, and Fatality Rates  
by District and Service<sup>1</sup>

	<i>Royal Newfoundland Regiment</i>		<i>Royal Naval Reserve</i>		<i>Mercantile Marine</i>	
	<i>Fatal Casualties</i>	<i>Fatalities as % of Enlistment<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Fatal Casualties</i>	<i>Fatalities as % of Enlistment</i>	<i>Fatal Casualties</i>	<i>Fatalities as % of Enlistment</i>
Burgeo-La Poile	28	28.0	2	10.0	12	22.6
St. Georges	55	27.8	15	10.4	0	0
Labrador	7	21.6	1	12.5	0	0
TOTAL	1,281 <sup>3</sup>	28.3	171	8.7	101 <sup>4</sup>	20.2

<sup>1</sup>Only 11 fatal casualties were sustained by men of the Forestry Corps, and this service has been excluded from consideration in the tabulation. The distribution of Forestry Corps fatalities was: Twillingate 2; Trinity Bay, 1; Bay de Verde, 1; St. John's, 6; Fortune Bay, 1.

<sup>2</sup>Enlistment prior to May 1918 only.

<sup>3</sup>16 fatalities could not be allocated to districts.

<sup>4</sup>1 fatality could not be allocated to a specific district.

## THE IMPACT OF THE WAR ON ST. JOHN'S

Using the capital city as an example, a detailed picture of the impact of the War on a particular community can be developed. Time and financial constraints prohibited the completion of this sort of detailed analysis for the entire Regiment, but since nearly 30 percent of the RNR's personnel was enlisted in the capital, the choice is quite defensible. The original analysis was conducted on a ward by ward basis, but since there were no gross anomalies, the ward-specific totals have been consolidated (Table 11) to provide an overall, composite picture.

Some general comments are in order here, to supplement the more obvious conclusions one can draw from an examination of the table. These statistics refer to men who were actually accepted for enlistment in the Regiment. One must keep in mind that for Newfoundland as a whole the number of men accepted was approximately half of the number who wanted to enlist (Table 3). The medical standards were high in the beginning, but were relaxed, as they were in Canada, later in the war.

This resulted in an increasing number of men being given medical discharges upon re-examination in England. The increase in the number of medical discharges with age is perhaps an indication of this, as the older men were more likely to have medical deficiencies rendering them unsuitable for front-line infantry duty. However, it must be borne in mind that not all the medical discharges were the result of a lenient medical examination in St. John's. An unknown proportion represents men too badly wounded or otherwise injured to allow their return to active service.

The statistics on fatalities are the most sobering, especially as they relate to the whole question of Newfoundland's post-war development. In the case of the youngest age group fully a quarter of the men who enlisted were killed. This represented 14 percent, or 1 in 7 of the total number of all such young men in St. John's. A total of 48 percent of the enlistees of these ages were either killed or discharged as medically unfit. This represented 27 percent, more than 1 in 4 of all the 18-to 22-year-old men in the capital. The statistics for the older groups are less startling, at least in terms of the hole made in the age class, although the fatality rates, as a percentage of the number enlisting, were still high.

In the end, then, of the 4,667 men of St. John's aged 18 to 32 years in 1911, 1,368 (29.3 percent) enlisted in the RNR. Of these 353 were killed, and 321 given medical discharges for various reasons. A total of 49.3 percent of all those who enlisted were killed, seriously wounded, or suffered some medical disability. This represented 14.5 percent of the entire number of age-eligible men in St. John's. Nearly 8 percent, or 1 in 12, were killed.

These data are specific to St. John's, but the story they tell is one that

TABLE 10  
Comparative Casualty Rates; Canada and Newfoundland,  
World Wars I and II

<i>Fatal Casualties</i>	<i>1914-18</i>		<i>1935-45</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Enlistment</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Enlistment</i>
(All Services)				
Canada	61,332 <sup>1</sup>		42,036 <sup>2</sup>	
Newfoundland	1,570		551	
<i>Army Casualties</i>	<i>1914-18</i>		<i>1939-45</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Enlistment</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Enlistment</i>
Canadian Expeditionary Force <sup>3</sup>			Canadian Army (Active)	
Fatalities	59,544	9.6	22,911	3.2
Wounded	172,950	27.9	51,415	7.3
Total	232,494	37.5	74,326	10.5
Royal Newfoundland Regiment <sup>4</sup>			Newfoundland Batteries, Royal Artillery	
Fatalities	1,297	20.8	72	1.1
Wounded	2,314	37.1		
Total	3,611	57.9		
				<i>% of Overseas</i>
				5.6
				12.6
				18.1

<sup>1</sup>All Fatal Casualties: CEF, 59,544; RFC/RNAS, 1,563; RCN, 225.

<sup>2</sup>All Fatal Casualties: CA(A) 22,911; RCAF, 17,101; RCN, 2,024.

<sup>3</sup>Source PAC RG24. Vol. 1883-A, #28

<sup>4</sup>Source PAN Report of the Department of Militia, 1920

TABLE 11  
The Mobilization of Manpower for Active Service:  
St. John's<sup>1</sup>

Age	Enlisted			Dead			Discharged-Medically Unfit		
	Total	% of Total	% of Eligible	Total	% of Total	% of Enlist.	Total	% of Enlist.	% of Age Group
18-22	1,849	76.2	56.4	266	75.4	25.5	237	22.7	12.8
23-27	1,499	18.1	16.5	70	19.8	28.2	57	23.0	3.8
28-32	1,319	77	5.8	17	4.8	22.1	27	35.1	2.0
Total	4,667	100.0	29.3	353	100.0	25.8	321	23.5	6.9

<sup>1</sup>This tabulation is based on compilations made by Jessie Chisholm from company records and other contemporary sources held in the Newfoundland Public Archives.



could be told about countless other places in Newfoundland and Canada. In the end, whether Newfoundland suffered the highest fatality rate in the Empire, or only the second, third or fourth, is immaterial. What is important is that she suffered heavily as a result of the war, and the loss of such substantial percentages of men in the prime of their lives could not but hinder her demographic, social, and economic development in later years.

## CONCLUSION

This paper was conceived of, and written, within the limits imposed by the available data, as a dispassionate examination of the magnitude and spatial patterns of Newfoundland's manpower mobilization during the Great War. It has been demonstrated that while the colony's enlistment rate was not exceptionally high, it was certainly impressive, particularly in light of the considerable manpower requirements of the fishery and the peculiarities of her geography. The massive casualty rate was shown to be far in excess of the comparable Canadian rate, although the question of whether, as in the local legend, it was higher than that of any other dominion has had to be left unanswered.<sup>28</sup> However, the dangers of making such comparisons on a large scale were demonstrated by showing how much variability in small-scale local rates is hidden in colony or nation-wide totals.

Regardless of the actual numbers of men involved, there are aspects of Newfoundland's contribution to the prosecution of the common war effort that are unique. Nicholson, in his definitive study of the Regiment, has pointed out these characteristics, but it is perhaps appropriate to review them here. Recruitment for the Army during the Great War was, in many cases on both sides of the Atlantic, and especially in the early stages of the conflict, a very localized phenomenon. The British 'Pals Battalions' are perhaps the best examples of this. However, a good number of the units raised in Canada, especially those drawing heavily on the pre-war Militia shared a similar local bond. Despite this, there is a good deal of truth in Nicholson's comment that:

Of the many splendid fighting units that crossed the seas to serve in France and Flanders and on the other fronts during that grim struggle, no other body of troops was so singularly and closely identified with the community from which it came. Here was a contingent whose ranks were filled almost exclusively by men sharing a common loyalty to the island Colony of their birth and upbringing. The very manner of their raising was unique. Where else could a people, who for almost a half-century had known no military organization of any kind, promptly establish a committee of public citizens who within sixty days of the outbreak of hostilities would recruit, partially equip, and dispatch overseas half a thousand men as the initial contribution to a full battalion of infantry?(Nicholson, 1964:xiii.)

Perhaps even more significant is the fact that, because of the date of passage of the Newfoundland Military Service Act, none of the conscripts ever saw action, or were even taken on strength of a unit in the field. Thus, it can be a matter of pride that the actual fighting strength of the First Battalion, RNR throughout its campaigns, was entirely composed of men who had voluntarily offered themselves for service. Nicholson concludes by saying that this "was a unique record enjoyed alone by the Royal Newfoundland Regiment among the units, Allied or Enemy which fought in the First World War".<sup>29</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The drive to maintain a high rate of enlistment in Newfoundland, to ensure that the colony's contribution would remain "in the very first rank in proportion to her population" within the Empire, was referred to by the Governor, Sir William Davidson, as a "Race of Honour" *Journal of the House of Assembly, 1916*, Newfoundland Patriotic Association Report, March 1916, p.315. Quoted in O'Brien, 122.

<sup>2</sup>An additional 505 men are known to have served in the Mercantile Marine. However, since this was neither a combatant nor a paramilitary force, and data on merchant marine enlistments are not available for the other countries against which Newfoundland is being compared here, this service receives little attention in this paper, in spite of its obvious importance. This is unfortunate, as it perpetuates a long tradition of neglect nowhere more clearly illustrated than in *The Times History of the War*, which, in the Newfoundland chapter, does not even mention it.

<sup>3</sup>A brief discussion of this same question may be found in O'Brien, Chapter v.

<sup>4</sup>In keeping with the determination to maintain the Regiment's character as a distinctly Newfoundland force, enlistment was restricted to Newfoundland residents, and this convention was strictly adhered to, even in the face of chronic manpower shortages. Two "outsiders" found their way into the Regiment in August 1914, and one later, but all three were subsequently relieved of their duties following a great deal of adverse publicity (O'Brien, 95).

<sup>5</sup>"Details regarding the Royal Canadian Navy." Department of the Naval Service, Ottawa, 16 May 1918 (N.S.C. 1000-5-5).

<sup>6</sup>Nicholson, 1962: Wise, 634: "Royal Canadian Air Force in World War One." *Royal Air Force Quarterly* 6 (1935), 296-300.

<sup>7</sup>*Report of the Ministry: Overseas Military Forces Canada*, p.346.

<sup>8</sup>Nicholson, 1962, p.504. The fullest discussion is found in S.F. Wise Appendix c: Statistical Analysis of Canadians in the British Flying Service.

<sup>9</sup>CEF Personnel Statistics, PAC RG24, File 1842.

<sup>10</sup>See Sharpe (1983).

<sup>11</sup>The reasons may never be completely understood. See Sharpe, *ibid*.

<sup>12</sup>See Sharpe (1982).

<sup>13</sup>It is important to note that the rate for Great Britain has not been calculated here, since the strength of the British Army overseas is not readily available.

<sup>14</sup>O'Brien presents some tables on enlistment by region, but these are not complete, and are based on contemporary press accounts.

<sup>15</sup>It must be borne in mind that these two districts contained some small 'outport' commu-

nities, notably Bell Island and Portugal Cove, which had high rates of enlistment. As O'Brien (124, footnote 73) points out, this was a fact ignored at the time.

<sup>16</sup>The Regiment was given the privilege of using the prefix "Royal" in December 1917, as a reward for its "gallantry and matchless valor" during the battles of Ypres and Cambrai. This was a singular honour. No other overseas regiment in the history of British arms had been granted this privilege *during* the hostilities in which it was engaged. Furthermore, no other regiment was granted this right during The First World War. Only two other regiments had been so honoured during actual hostilities: the Royal Regiment of Foot of Ireland, in 1665; and the Princess Charlotte of Wales Royal Berkshire Regiment, in 1885.

<sup>17</sup>These men were not only raised quickly, but by a rather unusual mechanism. In August 1914 a group of citizens meeting in the CLB Armoury in St. John's resolved to authorize the Governor to appoint a committee of citizens to enlist and equip the 500 troops promised to Britain. The Newfoundland Patriotic Committee (later Association) was established by the Governor on August 17, and for the next three years — until the establishment of a Department of Militia in August of 1917 — this group of citizens carried out all the functions and responsibilities involved in raising, equipping and transporting the men of the Regiment, as well as caring for their personal needs and comforts in the field.

<sup>18</sup>The Anglican Church Lads Brigade (CLB) dated from 1892; the Catholic Cadet Corps from 1896; the Methodist Guards Brigade from 1900 and the Presbyterian Newfoundland Highlanders from 1907. There were Corps on Bell Island and in Harbour Grace, but these organizations were largely an urban phenomenon in which inter-denominational rivalry played a great role.

<sup>19</sup>O'Brien (p.71) indicates that 880 men came forward during the first three weeks of recruitment. Of these, 630 were from St. John's; 520 were accepted, 200 rejected and the rest "held under consideration". Of the first 442, the breakdown by Brigade was as follows:

Catholic Cadet Corps	130	29.4%
Church Lads Brigade	174	39.4%
Methodist Guard's Brigade	73	16.5%
Newfoundland Highlanders	47	10.6%
Frontiersmen	18	4.1%
	442	100.0%

<sup>20</sup>O'Brien (p. 124, footnote 72) indicates that while religion "was not a factor in St. John's, it seems to have exerted an influence in Placentia — St. Mary's and Bay de Verde districts, as well as along the southwest coast."

<sup>21</sup>For Canada, this has been done in Granatstein and Hitsman. For a discussion of conscription in Newfoundland, see Noel and Rowe.

<sup>22</sup>Rowe (p. 374) argues that as early as 1917 Newfoundland was "running out of available manpower" because of the conflicting demands of the fishery and the armed forces. There were still a fair number of *eligible* men, but clearly not all were *available* for active service.

<sup>23</sup>Monthly enlistment figures are found in the Department of Militia Report, 1919. Pp.514-15.

<sup>24</sup>These data were reported by HMS *Briton* on 17 February 1916, and printed in *The Evening Telegram* on 13 March 1916 in a small box on page 6. The lack of priority accorded to this story is typical of the type of publicity which the Reserve received.

<sup>25</sup>This offer was made on 5 August, one day after the outbreak of hostilities. The offer of 1,000 men for the RN was not accepted by HM Government until 14 August, while the offer of 500 soldiers was accepted within 24 hours (Nicholson, p. 102).

<sup>26</sup>In many respects, enlistment in the Reserve, once the war had begun, was unattractive. The pay was about 56 cents per day, compared with \$1.10 in the Regiment. Furthermore, one's name was unlikely to become a household word. Names of soldiers, but not of sailors were displayed

in post offices throughout the colony. Even the newspapers were unlikely to publish the names of recruits until two months or more after their departure (O'Brien, 102).

<sup>27</sup>Only fatal casualties can be examined, as reliable and comprehensive data on non-fatal casualties were not compiled. Those data which do exist are suspect, because of the considerable amount of multiple counting of individual men. See Table 5, Note 2.

<sup>28</sup>In any case, it can legitimately be asked what profit there might be in answering such questions even if it were possible to do so. Terraine, in his discussion of "the Great Casualty Myth", lays bare the underpinning of what he argues is an essentially British myth. No accurate assessment can be made of the total number of casualties in the Great War, but there is general agreement that it would be in the order of 13 million. This is a huge number. However, as Terraine so cogently argues, we must view this estimate, which includes the dead of all belligerents, in the context of the Soviet Union's 13.6 million military dead of 1941-45, to which must be added about 7 million civilian casualties. Terraine concludes, however, having pointed out that a rough estimate of the total number of dead in the Second War, including both civilian and military, would be about 55 million, by saying "even if the reality behind the Great Casualty Myth is not quite so bad, it is bad enough".

<sup>29</sup>Nicholson gives no proof for his claim, and one wonders whether such proof could ever be found. The author has no data for British, other Imperial or enemy forces, but the data for Canada raise questions about the 'uniqueness' of Newfoundland's position. Only 47,509 MSA conscripts went overseas (Militia and Defence file HQ 1064-30-6, Vol. 8) and of these only 24,132 were taken on strength of units in the field (Militia and Defence file HQ 683-1-12, Vol. 13). In 1918 the average monthly strength of the Canadian Expeditionary Force overseas was 262,000. Since the conscripts actually taken on strength made up only 9 percent of this total, one can legitimately ask whether there may not have been at least some 'units' (i.e. battalions comparable in size to the RNR) among the CEF battalions in the field that never received any reinforcements raised through conscription.

## References

- Adam-Smith, P. *The Anzacs*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978.
- Buchan, John. *The History of the South African Forces in France*. London: T. Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1920.
- Canada: *Canada Year Book*, 1947.
- Canada: *Census of Canada*, 1911.
- Canada: Department of the Naval Service, "Details regarding the Royal Canadian Navy". Ottawa, 16 May, 1918. N.S.C. 1000-5-5 -Secret.
- Canada: Overseas Military Forces, *Report of the Ministry: Overseas Military Forces of Canada, 1914-18*. London: n.d.
- Canada: Public Archives. GAQ files in R.G. 24, Files 1842, 1844, 1892, relation to the CEF, and File 1819, 4-126, 'Book of Remembrance'.
- Duguid, Col. A.F. *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War*. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938.
- Fetherstonhaugh, R.C. *The Royal Montreal Regiment: 14th Battalion CEF 1914-25*. Montreal: Gazette Printing Co., 1927.
- . *The 13th Battalion: Royal Highlanders of Canada, 1914-19*. (Toronto): The 13th Battalion, Royal Highlanders of Canada, 1925.
- . *The 24th Battalion CEF: Victoria Rifles of Canada 1914-1919*. Montreal: Gazette Printing Co., 1930.

- Granatstein, J. L. and J.M. Hitsman. *Broken Promises: A history of conscription in Canada*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- An Historical Sketch of the Seventy-Seventh Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force*. Ottawa: War Publications Ltd., 1926.
- Hodder-Williams, Ralph. *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry 1914-1919*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923.
- Mansergh, N. *The Commonwealth Experience*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969.
- MacEvoy, Bernard and A.H. Finlay. *History of the 72nd Canadian Infantry Battalion: Seaforth Highlanders of Canada*. Vancouver: Cowan and Brookhouse, 1920.
- McWilliams, J.L., and R.J. Steele. *The Suicide Battalion*. Edmonton: Hurtig, 1978.
- Murray, Col. W.W. *The History of the 2nd Canadian Battalion (East. Ontario Regiment) CEF*. Ottawa: Mortimer Ltd., 1947.
- Newfoundland: *Census of 1911*.
- Newfoundland: *Report of the Department of Militia 1919 and 1920*.
- Nicholson, G.W.L. *Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1918*. Ottawa, Queen Printer, 1962.
- . *The Fighting Newfoundlander*. St. John's: Government of Newfoundland, 1964.
- Noel, S.J.R. *Politics in Newfoundland*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971.
- O'Brien, P.R. "The Newfoundland Patriotic Association: The administration of the war effort 1914-1918". M.A. Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1981.
- Rowe, F.W. *History of Newfoundland and Labrador*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1980.
- "Royal Canadian Air Force in World War One." *Royal Air Force Quarterly*, 6 (1935): 296-300.
- Sharpe, C.A. "Enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1918: A Regional Analysis". *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 18 (1983): 15-29.
- . "The Canadian Expeditionary Force: An analysis of its 'national' composition". Unpublished manuscript, 1982.
- Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire*. London: HMSO, 1922.
- Stevens, G.R. *A City Goes to War: The 49th Infantry Battalion (Loyal Edmonton Regiment)*. Brampton: Charters Publishing Co., 1964.
- The Times History of the War*, Vol. 14, Chapter ccxiii "Newfoundland and the War". London: *The Times*.
- Topp, Lt. Col. C.B. *The 42nd Battalion CEF: Royal Highlanders of Canada in the Great War*. Montreal: Gazette Printing Co., 1931.
- Terraine, John. *The Smoke and the Fire*. London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1980.
- Urquhart, H.M. *The History of the 16th Battalion (The Canadian Scottish) Canadian Expeditionary Force in the Great War, 1914-1919*. Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1932.
- Wise, S.F. *Canadian Airmen and the First World War, The Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force*. Vol.1, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980.