

Documents on Relations Between Canada and Newfoundland, Volume 2, 1940-1949, Confederation. PAUL A. BRIDLE, ed. Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1984, 2106 p. ISBN 0-660-52444 \$30.00.

In this book, Paul Bridle has assembled a fine, well-balanced source for the study of the complex events which led to Newfoundland's 1949 entry into the Canadian federation. Official Canadian, British, and Newfoundland public records are presented in combination with key documents from numerous private manuscript collections and apt quotations from *Hansard* and such secondary sources as J.W. Pickersgill's *The Mackenzie King Record*. Even the largely Canadian origin and/or destination of many of the telegrams, memoranda, and despatches does not detract in any great measure from the excellence of the selection of the documents.

A collection of documents such as this cannot be presented in a vacuum, and Bridle has not broken this cardinal rule. Indeed, the preface and introduction set the time and the background, while the "Chronology" and the "List of Major Players" provide the setting, the broad outline, and easy reference. The documents themselves present a complex and at times perplexing story, and the editorial footnotes take on the role of narrator, filling in explanations and providing such cross-references as may be necessary. Even the thematic division of the documents aids the reader; act follows act in logical sequence. As an entity, the total package makes the process of both reading and assimilating such a massive amount of information manageable.

The work is not, however, without flaws. Although they are few and relatively minor in character, they are intrinsically related to the basic selection process. One question I would raise is the utility of printing extensive quotations from *Hansard*. Could those 120 pages in succession not have been better employed in printing either newspaper clippings or deleted attachments which are not as accessible? It is, at times, frustrating to see the "not printed" symbol following a passage which begins, "In reference to my telegram of...." One wonders just what was said in the item which was not printed.

Another potentially troublesome matter, which Bridle freely acknowledges in his preface (ix), is a heavy reliance on Canadian sources (or collections in Canadian repositories), in particular the records of the Department of External Affairs. The latter do, however, contain international communications as well as departmental memoranda and correspondence and thus provide both Newfoundland and British opinions, albeit often as seen through the eyes of Canadian observers. Bridle's skilful wedding of such documentation to the pertinent documents from the Public Record Office in London and assorted records from Newfoundland largely counteracts what could have been a major problem in the volume. The loss of some detail does not necessarily mean lack of substance or the deletion of key factors which might affect the balance. And scholars are welcome, indeed invited, to turn to the original files and review the unpublished material.

No matter how many documents might be chosen from the numerous potential repositories, one theme would stand out in sharp relief. The Canadian government's policy of non-intervention in Newfoundland's democratic choice of her future form of government did not mean a lack of preparation for the eventuality of Confederation. Long before the calling of the National Convention and the subsequent referenda, dedicated Canadian officials who occupied the corridors, if not the seats, of power went as far as possible to ensure that when Newfoundlanders examined Canada and union they would not find them lacking. R.A. MacKay's tireless efforts, as both a Canadian official

and a private citizen (pp. 1962-1989), are readily apparent in this volume and its predecessor. As Chairman of the Interdepartmental Committee on Newfoundland and the editor of *Newfoundland: Economic, Diplomatic and Strategic Studies* (Toronto, 1946), MacKay had a sympathetic understanding of Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders as well as the attention and respect of those who made political decisions and those who influenced them.

Even looking at the events from a strictly Canadian perspective, and recognizing the key roles played by a small group of Newfoundlanders led by J.R. Smallwood, F. Gordon Bradley, and J.B. McEvoy, MacKay did not single-handedly bring about Confederation. Canadian High Commissioners in St. John's, Charles Burchell and J. Scott Macdonald, as well as Bridle himself as Acting High Commissioner were active in a discreet manner in St. John's and in a more outspoken way in Ottawa. Ruffled feathers were smoothed and advice on how, or how *not*, to proceed was offered. And these individuals were on location, seeing to it that all possible avenues were followed to ensure that Canada appeared non-threatening (or less threatening) to Newfoundland autonomy.

Good advice is of little use unless it is heeded, and key officials such as Hugh Keenleyside and Norman Robertson worked in their respective domains to keep relations and negotiations cordial. Robertson, for example, was instrumental in his capacity as Canadian High Commissioner to Great Britain in talks between London and Ottawa on the subject of the addition of the Confederation option to the referendum ballot paper and in the final wording of that option. He also reinforced the notion that Canada's role in that addition and its content was best kept out of the public (Newfoundland) eye (pp. 781 passim). One might question the level of influence these officials had on politicians and events; but, one cannot doubt their commitment to the end result.

In order to round out the story of Confederation, Bridle has taken the reader beyond 31 March 1949 and documented the establishment of Canadian government programmes and offices in Newfoundland. Even as Charles Burchell was brought back to the High Commission in St. John's in late 1948 to smooth out the details of Confederation, those dedicated officials kept their fingers on the pulse of public opinion. The volume closes with union accomplished; it is left to the reader and historian to interpret the how's and the why's.

Kathy Hall
Manuscript Division
Public Archives of Canada