Document généré le 5 mai 2024 08:32

Newfoundland Studies

The Career of F. Gordon Bradley

J. K. Hiller

Volume 4, numéro 2, fall 1988

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds4_2nc01

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Éditeur(s)

Faculty of Arts, Memorial University

ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)
1715-1430 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer cette note

Hiller, J. K. (1988). The Career of F. Gordon Bradley. *Newfoundland Studies*, *4*(2), 163–180.

All rights reserved © Memorial University, 1988

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

https://www.erudit.org/fr/

RESEARCH NOTE

The Career of F. Gordon Bradley

J.K. HILLER

IN 1986 THE Newfoundland Museum asked me to write a short political biography of F. Gordon Bradley. The house in which he lived in Bonavista was under restoration, and the Museum needed the study for interpretive purposes. Like many others I saw him as a minor figure — J.R. Smallwood's sleepy second fiddle in the confederation campaign, and an equally sleepy federal politician thereafter. It was a picture largely derived from Smallwood's writings, and the contract with the Museum offered an interesting chance to test it against the evidence. The familiar restraints of time and money prevented an exhaustive or even a very thorough study. It was based on the available secondary sources for the period of Bradley's political career (1923-66), printed primary sources, and Bradley's private papers.[1] This extensive collection is apparently a fraction of what once existed. Most of the surviving correspondence dates from the 1950s and early 1960s, which means that there is a tantalizing gap for the crucial period of the 1940s. Nevertheless, the papers contain a scattering of documents from earlier periods, and a good deal of autobiographical information which, taken with other sources, allowed a fuller portrait to emerge than has existed hitherto. What follows is a summary of my findings, which I hope will stimulate further work on an interesting and neglected figure.

Born in St. John's in 1888, the son of a cabinetmaker, Bradley was educated at the Methodist College, leaving in 1906 to spend three years as the headmaster of the Methodist high school in Bonavista, his paternal grandfather's birthplace. A severe attack of scarlet fever in 1894, followed by kid-

NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES 4, 2 (1988)
0823-1737

ney collapse, was thought to have permanently weakened his constitution and left him susceptible to tuberculosis, and the family doctor conceived that fresh air and early nights might repair some of the damage (Bradley to George Sellars 14 February 56; to A.E. Hawkins 2 May '56, BP). It was the start of a lifelong association with Bonavista. He was happy there, grew to like outport life, and met his future wife, Ethel Roper, daughter of the stipendiary magistrate. But his ambition was to be a lawyer, and he returned to St. John's to enter the law office of J.M. Kent, a prominent Liberal politician. Bradley moved on to Dalhousie Law School in 1911, graduated in 1914, and returned to St. John's to practise.

One of the more promising younger members of the Newfoundland bar, and active with the Masons and the Loyal Orange Association (LOA), Bradley was a likely candidate for political office. After a period of hesitation, and with some persuasion, he stood in the 1923 election as a candidate for J.R. Bennett's Liberal-Labour-Progressive party, an essentially right-wing grouping, in Trinity Bay. Though soundly defeated, he remained involved in political life partly, perhaps, because he had been elected Grand Master of the LOA. During the confused and confusing maneuvers that followed R.A. Squires' resignation as Liberal prime minister amid charges of corrupt practice in 1923, Bradley flirted with all factions. Squires engaged him as his lawyer, but at the same time he agreed with Squires' successor, W.R. Warren, that he would run as a Liberal in Port-de-Grave in the next election. Warren was replaced by A.E. Hickman in May, 1924; and soon after, Bradley announced that he would run in the same district, but for Walter Monroe's Liberal-Conservatives. He won Port-de-Grave in June, 1924, by five votes. Monroe rewarded him with a seat in the cabinet, without portfolio.

Two years later, Bradley crossed the House with four other government members to sit as an independent with Peter Cashin, who had left Monroe a year earlier. While he was clearly disillusioned with the Monroe government, which he persistently attacked for class bias, extravagance, and failure to look after the interests of the fishery (*Proceedings of the House of Assembly* [1926] 50, 907; [1928] 76), there is reason to suppose that Bradley had by this time firmly attached himself to Squires, who fully intended to return to active politics. In the spring of 1928 nine opposition members, including Bradley, announced that they had formed a party to support Squires. Hickman was shunted aside as Liberal leader, and Squires led a revived party to victory in the June, 1928, election. Bradley won Trinity Centre and entered the cabinet without portfolio, becoming Solicitor General in June, 1929. He was, at the same time, a director of the Newfoundland Railway and a member of the Treasury Board and the Public Health and Charities Commission.

Since no comprehensive study exists of Squires' second government, it is difficult to assess Bradley's role and importance. Some certainly saw him

as one of Squires' chief lieutenants, and therefore without any clearly defined independent role. It is known, however, that as the financial crisis darkened, he became distressed at Squires' apparent inability to take decisive action. In particular, Bradley strongly advocated default on public debt payments, or at least the threat to do so, but was unable to persuade Squires of the validity of his point of view (David Bradley). In 1932 the government collapsed, and in the June election all Liberal candidates were defeated except two: Roland Starkes in Green Bay, and Bradley, who had taken over Squires' Humber seat. Whether he wanted the position or not, Bradley found himself the leader of the tiny opposition and perhaps the most prominent critic of the actions of the Alderdice government as it led the country towards the suspension of responsible government.

What, then, were Bradley's political views at this critical juncture in Newfoundland history? The evidence presently available indicates that while he had been a confederate since his days at Dalhousie (speech to Toronto Men's Liberal Club 1952, BP), he was not an active or public proponent of that view, assuming that in time Newfoundland would find what he considered its appropriate place within Canada. He was never a romantic nationalist — "I do not care two straws for Newfoundland as an abstraction," he once wrote (*Fishermen's Advocate* 14 March 1941) — and assessed his country's place in the world with pessimistic realism. Small, remote, and economically weak, Newfoundland in his view could not survive and prosper as an independent unit. Yet this did not lead him, in the early 1930s, to acquiesce in the collapse of political independence in the hope that confederation would be the result. Though he had rejected socialism as a political philosophy (Bradley to H. Mifflin 4 March 1960, BP), and remained at heart a laissez faire liberal, he was a firm democrat who believed not only that the people had to be involved in important political decisions, but that the state had a primary duty to serve the greatest good of the greatest number and to help those most in need. Further, he resented deeply the pressures that were being placed on Newfoundland by its creditors, by the British government, and by large foreign corporations such as the paper companies; and he pilloried those whom he saw as the local collaborators, principally the Water Street businessmen and their political representatives. Newfoundland's future might lie with Canada; but he thought it should move into confederation as an independent country, by the free choice of its people.

One of Squires' defeated candidates, J.R. Smallwood, has claimed that he had to work hard to infuse vitality into the Liberal opposition, drafting all their questions and writing Starkes' speeches (*I Chose Canada* 190-1). This is the first of a series of assertions by Smallwood that in effect he did Bradley's work for him. Such statements are difficult to assess. There is no doubt that Bradley and Smallwood were closely associated at this time, and given the latter's extraordinary energy, no doubt they discussed strategy and speech

drafts. But that Smallwood virtually ran the opposition from the Colonial Building galleries seems improbable. Bradley was by this time an experienced politician, a good speaker, and a man who knew his own mind.

Whatever the truth of the matter, Bradley was active and vocal during the 1933 sessions of the Assembly. Newfoundland, he said, had to stand up against the power of capital, "the grinding power which is gradually crushing the life out of the industry and the people of this country." There should be no more loans, a reduction in taxation, a fairer distribution of wealth, and a moratorium on debt payments:

> . . . in the interests of the people of this country it is [the government's] duty as the controller of life in this country to preserve that life . . . they have got to relieve that burden under which we are now suffering and which the people cannot bear and I fear will not bear quietly much longer . . . . Default is a subject which makes the ordinary smug self-complacent type of man shudder. Now I am not an advocate of default but . . . if it is necessary in the interests of the people it is not such a terrible thing to shudder at. Half the countries on the face of the earth have defaulted . . . . My one argument is that we cannot in the interests of the people pay all our bond indebtedness and murder humanity . . . . What are you going to do about it? . . .What scheme do you have to relieve the suffering immediately?
>
> (*Proceedings of the House of Assembly* 1933)

He went on in the same speech to urge a thorough reform of the fishery, arguing that the larger merchants should no longer be allowed to control it:

> The profits of the industry should go to the producer. The producer in Newfoundland is the fisherman . . . . He is the one who in the past has seldom if ever got any of the profits . . . . He was given a bare crust of bread while the Water Street merchant pilfered the jam. It is time we took the jam pot away from them . . . . If I were Prime Minister I would risk everything to try and encourage the producers . . . with a view to bringing this country out of the condition she is now in, and to bring her back to prosperity once again. This is not the time for the playing of party politics. There will be lots of time for the playing of that game again.

Such debates had an air of unreality about them, since the British government had already rejected default proposals and the country's fate was being decided in London and by the Amulree Royal Commission, whose report was published in October. Smallwood recounts how he was in Bradley's law office when the latter received an advance copy. Since he had concluded that a suspension of responsible government was desirable, Smallwood welcomed the report's recommendations. In contrast, Bradley "slammed down the book and swore." In the first place, he realized that the report had probably finished his political career. "My life is finished," Smallwood reports him as saying. "There'll be no more public life for me. I've let my law practice almost disappear since I came into politics. Now everything is gone" (*I Chose Canada* 191, 197; "The Story of Confederation" 5-6). But beyond that, Bradley was deeply despondent at Newfoundland's humiliation at the hands of its creditors, the British government and the local elite. The report itself he thought "exaggerated and misleading," and he resented its portrayal of New-

foundland politicians as "criminals and congenital idiots." He reckoned that Newfoundland had been singled out because of its numerical and financial weakness, and betrayed by a government composed of duplicitous minions of an irresponsible mercantile aristocracy intent on recouping what it was owed and fearful that he and Squires might return to power and increase income and profits taxes (*Fishermen's Advocate* 7 March 1941, 3 October 1942; Bradley to W.J. Abbot 11 December 1959, BP).

The Assembly met later that fall to discuss the report, and Smallwood once again gives himself much of the credit for Bradley's performance, claiming that he advised Bradley on strategy and dictated his major speeches (*I Chose Canada* 197-8) — claims that are probably something of an exaggeration. Bradley urged that the report's proposals not be rushed through, since he believed it to be important that the people should have a chance to understand and respond to them. But Alderdice refused an adjournment, and Bradley had to accept the inevitable. There would be a Commission government, and it behooved "every man and woman [to] do their utmost to assist in all activities which tend to the welfare of the country." But he predicted that the rosy pictures of life under the Commission being painted by its supporters would prove to be without foundation — "within the next two or three years you are going to find out that there will be a disillusionment, disappointment and reaction" — and complained bitterly that the people, without their consent, were being deprived not just of responsible, but of representative government:

> the voice of the people is stilled, muted, gagged and rendered inarticulate and that brings us to the position that we have no legal or constitutional means of making the will of the people known. What is left to them? . . . Newfoundlanders will simply be a governed people . . . the position of the country will be between a Crown Colony and nothing . . . . I predict that it is going to be many, many years before Newfoundland is going to be self-supporting again. To that position the Liberal Party cannot and will not assent . . . . We believe that some control must come; but we do want some means left to the people of this country of expressing their voice.
>
> (*Proceedings* 1933)

Though he knew that it was hopeless, he put and lost amendments calling for an election or a plebiscite and for the representation of Newfoundland in the British House of Commons. In his view, democracy in Newfoundland had been garrotted by "self-righteous hypocrites . . . in the hope that their self-imposed taskmasters would continue and augment their privileges" (*Fisherman's Advocate* 3 October 1942).

With the installation of the Commission government early in 1934, Bradley's prospects seemed bleak. His law practice was small, and any chance of preferment within the new regime seemed blocked by his known hostility to it and his past association with Squires. However, in March he was asked by the Commission to undertake an enquiry into "the conditions surrounding the employment of men in the lumber woods" (Neary; J. Hope Simpson

to Bradley 28 March 1934, BP), probably because of his involvement in settling strikes resulting from wage cuts imposed by the paper companies in 1933. The radical streak in Bradley had been stimulated by the Depression and the collapse of responsible government, and the report which the Commission received in August was not what it had wanted or expected. Indignant at the state into which the average Newfoundlander had fallen, he attacked the relationship between labour and capital in the forest industry, and provided a prescription for reform and rehabilitation — a plea for social and economic justice and a vision of what rural Newfoundland might be. The Commission buried the report on the grounds that it was a potentially dangerous political document. Bradley was infuriated at this response, which he thought dishonest and illustrative of the Commission's cozy relationship with big business.[2]

In terms of his career, this episode left him no better off than before. But in 1935 the Commission divided the country into seven administrative districts, each with a chief magistrate who would act as the local representative of the central government, besides conducting judicial business. Finding suitably qualified and experienced men for these positions was not easy, and Bradley was an obvious candidate. The Commission may also have thought it advisable to move a potential troublemaker out of St. John's. Friends in the civil service may have wanted to help him. Offered the post of chief magistrate at Bonavista with effect from July 1, 1935, Bradley gladly accepted. He had no liking for or great faith in the Commission system. But he needed a regular salary; he had lost any affection he might once have had for St. John's; and he could move into the fine old Roper house owned by his wife. Beyond these "personal and selfish considerations," Bradley later wrote to Brian Dunfield,

> . . . I thought I might be of service in the rehabilitation of a stricken people . . . . I had my own ideas of land development (subsistence farming) and for revolutionising the shore fishery of the Bonavista Peninsula, including the construction of the [Bonavista] Breakwater and a mobile fleet of small fishing vessels.
>
> (4 March 1939, BP)

He started out with energy and enthusiasm, but was soon disillusioned. He found the Commission insensitive to the needs of the area, and to his ideas and his value. "Government flunkeys from the St. John's offices were the big men," he told Dunfield, "and I was supposed to whisper all I knew in their ears and then sit dumbly by and let them mess about. What was the use?" His temper was not improved by a transfer to Grand Falls in December, 1936, where he stayed for nearly three years, increasingly frustrated and unhappy. Finally, in November, 1939, he resigned from the magistracy and returned to Bonavista and his business, Bonavista Mutual Traders Ltd., which he had started in 1935. For the next seven years he lived as a small outport merchant, active in fraternal lodges, directing plays, and pursuing his hobbies

— woodworking, organ playing, reading and photography. For an outlet for his political views, he turned to the *Fishermen's Advocate*, the Fishermen's Protective Union (FPU) newspaper published in nearby Port Union.

Besides social notes chronicling the small change of Bonavista life, he contributed, usually under a pseudonym, several hundred political articles. In these he attacked the Commission and all its works, discussed the need for political change, and debated the options that faced Newfoundland in the future. In two long signed articles, he discussed the merits of confederation (*Fishermen's Advocate* 7, 20 March 1941; 10 September 1943). At this stage, Bradley appears to have been influenced by J.A. Hobson's analysis of British imperialism in his book *Imperialism: A Study* (1902), and he interpreted Newfoundland's past and present in Hobsonian terms. Imperialism, he wrote, was "the last weapon of defence in the armoury of monopoly finance capitalism to uphold the security of investments against human life and happiness." Thus Newfoundland, unable to generate substantial amounts of surplus capital, had been forced to borrow from English capitalists, who in turn controlled the English Conservative party. When the country found itself in financial difficulty, the capitalists, through the Conservative government, had prevented default and then imposed "a dictatorial control by a Dominions Office which was in turn controlled by the 'conservers' of capital who controlled the British Government of the day." It had been a game "to save capital at the expense of humanity." From this perspective, the Commission government was no more than a collection of bailiffs. For the future, humanity had to come first; those who had to be kept in mind, above all others, were "those whose way of life calls insistently for the amelioration of its bleakness and insecurity . . . the great majority whose need is greatest" (speech to Wesley Church Association 15 March 1947, BP). An independent Newfoundland, he argued, small and insignificant, unable to do very much to stimulate trade and industry, would become once again "the plaything of monopoly capitalism." Rejecting the idea of a continuation of the Commission or proposals for forms of closer association with either England or the United States, he urged the wisdom of examining what Canada had to offer. Newfoundlanders, whom he criticized for "pernicious individualism and inbred conservatism" (*Fishermen's Advocate* 21 January 1945) should realize that they were North Americans whose future was inevitably linked to that of the continent. They should discard ancient prejudices and "pride of insular independence" and look to a wider, Canadian future (Wesley Church speech).

It is difficult to say whether Bradley's articles had any influence. Among the great and good of St. John's, it is likely that they were dismissed as the ravings of an eccentric — for here was a St. John's-born lawyer who had voluntarily exiled himself to the outports, where he indulged in attacks both on the elite and the British government. But at the very least, the articles

kept Bradley's name before the public and it could be anticipated that he might well return to public life. Bradley himself, however, was unsure. He disliked the seamy side of local politics and was clearly tempted to stay in Bonavista for good (Bradley to G. Sellars 3 April 1952, BP). But when it was announced late in 1945 that elections would be held for a National Convention which would discuss Newfoundland's condition and future forms of government, he eventually agreed to stand as a candidate.

The catalyst was probably Smallwood. Hitherto an anticonfederate, by early 1946 Smallwood had become a born-again confederate and was actively planning how union with Canada might be brought about. He sought out Bradley, having known of the latter's confederate leanings since at least 1929 or 1930. What precisely transpired between them is difficult to establish. Smallwood's accounts relegate Bradley to a supporting role, but material in the Bradley papers suggests that he may have played a more important part than has been realized. Smallwood apparently was involved in a scheme to establish a confederate party under the leadership of Sir John Puddester, a member of the Commission government who had been in Alderdice's cabinet. Bradley was scandalized. Not only did he view Puddester as a quisling, but he thought the whole plan to be precipitate and politically insane. Bradley reckoned that public opinion was split between support for a return to responsible government and a continuation of the Commission, and that it would take months of careful work to make confederation appear as an acceptable alternative. There was a great deal of popular prejudice against confederation, and he thought that by acting too soon Smallwood and his associates could hurt the chances for a successful outcome (Bradley to Smallwood 28 February 1946, BP). Thus Bradley cautioned and advised Smallwood (Bradley to Smallwood 19, 20 March, 18 April, 11 May 1946, BP) and managed, so it seems, to ensure a less flamboyant approach — though it is significant that in the election for the National Convention in June, 1946, Bradley kept his confederate sympathies quiet, winning Bonavista East by 549 votes, while Smallwood made no secret of his conversion when campaigning in Bonavista Centre.

Bradley began during these months to speculate whether there was any way of putting confederation before the electorate without a prior return to responsible government. He feared that if that occurred it would be impossible to give confederation a fair hearing, since it would either be buried or become a political football. The solution seemed to be persistent propaganda, combined with an attempt to persuade the Convention to send a delegation to Ottawa to obtain draft terms of union to place before the electorate in the referendum. He was not to know that others in Ottawa and London had been thinking along similar lines; he told Smallwood to keep their plans and ideas confidential. "A programme of the character we have in mind is in the nature of a high political secret and equally susceptible to disclosure

and sabotage unless confined within a very small circle," he said (Bradley to Smallwood 11 May 1946, BP).

Both Smallwood and Richard Gwyn indicate that there was a meeting between Smallwood and Bradley at Bonavista, where it was agreed that if confederation occurred, Bradley would join the federal cabinet and Smallwood would become provincial premier (*I Chose Canada* 244-5; Gwyn 78). Moreover, Smallwood says that Bradley agreed to leave everything to him: "He was content, from the moment we shook hands in his house in Bonavista, to the moment he was sworn in as Canada's Secretary of State, to leave the work to me" ("The Story of Confederation" 20). It is consistent with Bradley's character and attitudes that he would have expressed a preference for the federal sphere, and it is likely that he was indeed content, at the age of 58, with chronic though unspecified health problems, to leave the leg work to the younger and more energetic Smallwood. But he did not abdicate all control and authority. He was an experienced and thoughtful politician who realized his potential value to the confederate cause, as did Smallwood. Lawyer, businessman, former solicitor general, prominent as a Methodist, Mason and Orangeman, Bradley could provide an articulate moral respectability to the confederate leadership. But he never managed to dominate Smallwood, and there was clearly some tension between the two.

Bradley's strategy was that the Convention should follow its prescribed course. It should complete its tasks of examining the state of the country and its finances, and then go on to consider alternative forms of future government. Recognized from the start as one of the Convention's senior members, he sat on the Steering, Fisheries and Transportation committees, and said nothing about forms of government. When the Chairman, Judge Cyril Fox, suggested that a delegation might go to Ottawa, Bradley disagreed, arguing that the factual surveys should be completed first (Webb 65). Smallwood, however, who had his own ideas, on October 28, 1946, moved that a delegation be sent (*I Chose Canada* 252-3). It is not known whether Bradley was consulted. If he was, he would have argued that the motion was precipitate and unwise. The motion was defeated, but the debate had several effects. Smallwood had made a strong move to establish himself as the recognized confederate leader; Bradley was forced to declare his support in principle for an Ottawa delegation; and the Convention became clearly divided on the confederation issue and therefore highly politicized at an early stage.

Canadians observed these events with mixed feelings. In particular they feared that if Smallwood led the confederate campaign its success would be jeopardized. Bradley was seen by the Canadian High Commissioner in St. John's as "the most promising man available," "abler, better educated, and more experienced" than Smallwood, a key figure if union was to be achieved (Bridle II, 291). Since Bradley commanded trust and respect, there were no objections raised to his accepting the chairmanship of the Convention when

Judge Fox died in November. He was supported by all factions, and the appointment had its advantages: as Chairman, Bradley would, *ex officio*, head any delegations that might be sent to London and Ottawa; and the election had the effect of making Smallwood convener of the Transportation Committee, and therefore a member of the Steering Committee.

Bradley did not neuter himself politically on becoming Chairman. He remained in close touch with Smallwood and the Canadian High Commissioner in St. John's and handled the delegations in such a way as to advance confederate strategy. He did not take an active part in the discussions of the London delegation with English officials in late April and early May, 1947, and refused to sign memoranda demanding cancellation of part of the sterling debt, the reopening of the US bases agreement, British payment of the Gander airport operating deficit, and an undertaking that confederation would not appear on the referendum ballot (Webb 84-91). The more negative the attitude of the British government, the better for confederation, and the London discussions were on the whole satisfactory from that point of view. But the option of retaining Commission government still existed and with it a continuation of existing financial arrangements. Bradley and Smallwood recognized that the Commission remained an attractive option to many voters and decided that they would have to work to delay the referendum as long as possible. The task would be to obtain generous terms from the federal government, preach their virtues, and then, only then, risk a vote (Bridle II, 470-84). Before the Ottawa delegation left St. John's in June, Bradley blithely told the Convention that it should be able to report by mid-July, and that the referendum could be held that fall. Once in Ottawa, he told Mackenzie King that the delegation would stay at least a month, perhaps longer — sufficient time, in any event, to delay the referendum to 1948 (Bridle II, 518).

Smallwood's account of the Ottawa delegation portrays Bradley as being uncomfortable, ill at ease, homesick and pessimistic. He hated the Ottawa climate and was prostrated by the heat: "He suffered every hour . . . for the three months we were there." As a result, "He was content to leave the work to me, and this made me more than happy" (*I Chose Canada* 270-1; Gwyn 87). The picture of Bradley being incapacitated in the Chateau Laurier while Smallwood handled the Canadians appears to be another exaggeration, though it must be emphasized that we do not yet have a detailed study of the Ottawa delegation's visit. It is evident, for instance, that Bradley's attitude was crucially important in persuading a reluctant federal government to formulate detailed draft terms of union, though Smallwood gives the strong impression that Bradley was ignorant of the cabinet's indecision. The Canadians still viewed Bradley as the key figure if confederation was to be accomplished, and he was insistent that without precise and generous terms the cause was hopeless. J.R. Baldwin of the Privy Council Office point-

ed out to Louis St. Laurent on April 4 that it was important to keep Bradley on side in the hope that he would lead the confederate campaign

> with a view to becoming the first provincial leader. I understand also that there is good reason to believe that unless he does there is little likelihood that any well-organized support for union with Canada in a referendum would develop, since he is the individual on whom the movement would rely . . . . [He will not] come out for confederation unless he thinks that the attitude of the Ottawa Government is sufficiently good to make a campaign in favour of union a success.
>
> (St. Laurent Papers XIX, 100-08, National Archives of Canada [NAC]; see also Mackenzie 186.)

On the basis of such evidence, it is reasonable to suppose that Bradley's influence, quite as much as Smallwood's lobbying, was instrumental in changing the government's attitude.

Bradley did not do as much committee work as other members of the delegation, and was certainly willing to leave much of the detail to Smallwood. Yet he made a very good impression on Mackenzie King and other Canadian ministers, handled all formalities with dignity, and fended off increasingly importunate demands from anticonfederates in St. John's that the delegation return home. Indeed, such was their outrage at the delegation's behaviour that by mid-September the High Commissioner's office was reporting rumours that Bradley would be ousted from the Chair, this to be followed by motions recommending an end to the Convention and a referendum ballot which would simply ask voters whether or not they wanted a return to responsible government (Bridle II, 631). Bradley was aware that he was returning to a hornets' nest. But he also knew that he and the confederates on the delegation had achieved what they wanted. There was no chance of a fall referendum, and they had obtained draft terms that could be recommended in good conscience to the electorate. When the Convention finally reconvened on October 11, Bradley cut off the expected attempt to remove him as Chairman and in a short, dramatic speech told the Convention that he had no intention of "tolerating further attack in a position where I cannot defend myself . . . . Gentlemen, this Convention is without a Chairman." With that he rose and walked out.[3]

Bradley played little part in the rest of the Convention, which closed at the end of January, 1948. Smallwood led the debate on the draft terms of union, thereby gaining immense public exposure and a close popular identification with confederation. In effect, Bradley had abdicated any claim to be leader of the confederate party. The official reason for his withdrawal was poor health, and no doubt he was exhausted by his summer in Ottawa. But he probably viewed the prospect of months of debate on the draft terms with dismay; and if there was to be a lengthy sparring match with the likes of Peter Cashin and Malcolm Hollett, then Smallwood was the better man for the job. For the time being, Bradley had played his role.

Once the Convention had recorded its final votes and the majority had made its recommendation against placing confederation on the ballot, Bradley emerged once again. He made a speech over the government radio station, VONF, condemning the majority for seeking to deny Newfoundlanders the chance to vote for confederation and asking his listeners to send telegrams demanding that they have that opportunity. Smallwood made a similar speech on radio station VOCM. This strategy had been decided well in advance. Bradley and Smallwood saw that the majority's action had played into their hands; in Bradley's words, it "spelled their doom" (Bradley to A.E. Hickman 4 October 1949, BP). The telegrams deluged in, providing London with a strong justification for doing what it would doubtless have done anyway — placing confederation on the ballot. Bradley became president of the Confederate Association in March, 1948, made effective radio speeches, campaigned along the east coast, and helped Smallwood raise funds.

The first referendum (June 3, 1948) did not give a clear majority to any single form of government. Commission government was dropped as an option, and a second referendum scheduled for July 22. In the second campaign the confederates played the sectarian card, a ploy with which Bradley, as a prominent Orangeman, was closely associated. Bishop J.M. O'Neill of Harbour Grace claimed in a letter to Louis St. Laurent on December 28, 1948, that "Bradley served notice on one of my priests after the first referendum to the effect that 'This time it is going to be a straight sectarian campaign.' The facts eloquently bear [him] out!" (St. Laurent Papers, LXI, N-19-2, NAC). Bradley simply argued that Protestants and Orangemen had been offended by Roman Catholic behaviour in the first referendum, and had to act. The result was the famous Orange letter, circulated in June, which alleged that the Roman Catholic church was trying to dominate Newfoundland.[4] There is little doubt that this had the effect of driving a significant number of Protestant votes into the confederate camp and assisted in the confederate victory.

The referenda over, both Bradley and Smallwood were appointed to the delegation which was to go to Ottawa to negotiate the final terms of union. They left Newfoundland early in order to attend the national Liberal party convention (MacKenzie 211; Bridle II, 1003). In a speech delivered in June, 1949, Bradley stated that it was not until this time that he began to think seriously about which Canadian party to join. He wrote off the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and Social Credit:

> I am exceedingly suspicious of modern isms, and I think that history goes far to prove that it is seldom indeed that these new theories work out as anticipated. And so neither the CCF nor the Social Credit parties had any attraction for me. I was left with the choice between the Liberal Party and the Tory Party.

He scanned the records of each party since 1896 "as they related to the common man." Not surprisingly, given the length of time the Liberals had been

in power, he found their record the more impressive and decided to join them (*Montreal Gazette* 11 February 1950). So he said; but this explanation is disingenuous at best. Bradley was liberal by temperament, had been a Newfoundland Liberal, and both he and Smallwood had been in close touch with the King government since 1946. Though 1948 was the moment of formal affiliation, the die had been cast long before.

While the final terms were being negotiated, discussion began on division of loaves and fishes. The Bonavista agreement still stood, and Bradley had no objection to moving to Ottawa. The difficulty was to find him a cabinet portfolio. Smallwood claims he played the fixer:

> He had never had any experience in public administration, nor any ambition to acquire it; he really wasn't interested in the complicated system of Canadian Federal Government, and he had no intention of becoming so interested. Yet Newfoundlanders would be watching what he got.

So, says Smallwood, he suggested to Jack Pickersgill that Bradley become Secretary of State, a position which Smallwood reckoned Newfoundlanders could be trusted to confuse with the far more important American post with the same title. "And, of course, that is what Bradley became. He wouldn't have been happy with any office in Ottawa, but he was less unhappy there than he would have been anywhere else" (*I Chose Canada* 322-4; but see Pickersgill 84). Bradley was sworn in on April 1, 1949, as part of the ceremonies marking Newfoundland's entry into confederation, making an eloquent and frequently-quoted speech. In the June 11 federal election he became MP for Bonavista-Twillingate.

There is truth in Smallwood's remarks about Bradley's move to Ottawa. The latter, now aged 61, knew that he was nearing the end of his active career, and confessed that he had lost any desire "to sit in the seat of the mighty" (Bradley to E. Lindsay, 1950, BP). He had no ambition for a major post, and would probably not have had the stamina if he had acquired one. Bradley's relatively junior status in the federal government, as well as his age and flagging enthusiasm, did not make him a very effective Newfoundland minister in Ottawa, and tensions soon developed between himself and Smallwood. Moreover, Bradley's conservative streak began to reassert itself, and he found himself increasingly estranged from current trends in both federal and provincial politics. As early as May, 1950, he was complaining about the provincial government's inexperience, and what he described as its doctrinaire welfare state complex learned from "socialist literature" (Bradley to P.W. Crummey 8 May 1959). He thought the quality of the government low, and regretted Smallwood's dominance:

> Smallwood himself was a man of no experience. He had been a doctrinaire socialist with a hobby for publicity and a desire to get into public life. He had spent a good deal of his time listening to debates in the House of Assembly 20 years and more ago, and

> talking politics and social theory when he got a chance, but of actual experience in public administration, he had none whatsoever. Nevertheless, he had a superficial smattering of the structures of Government and an ability to talk possessed by few individuals on earth. The inevitable result was that at the outset, he dominated the whole Government. That was obvious from the beginning.
>
> (Bradley to G. Sellars 11 February 1952, BP.)

Against this general background of increasing mistrust, there developed a series of disputes over fisheries policy centering upon Bradley's promotion of a longliner fishery at Bonavista. Bradley became increasingly skeptical of Smallwood's ability to handle the fisheries, and it seemed to him that the premier was far more interested in imprudent, speculative industrial ventures. The schemes, he wrote, seemed

> to have no foundation except the desire of some industrialists to sneak ome of their assets across the Atlantic so as to provide a nest egg for themselves if they have to fly the country in the event of a Russian advance, and their castles in the air are built thereon by Joey and this fellow Valdmanis.
>
> (Bradley to G. Sellars 11 February 1952, BP.)

The financial implications of Smallwood's behaviour frightened him, and he lamented that the provincial Tories were so weak and ineffective.

As the 1953 federal election approached, there was speculation as to whether Bradley would run again in Bonavista-Twillingate. His health was not good, he was disillusioned with that confederation had wrought in Newfoundland, and his relations with Smallwood were icy. Not surprisingly, Bradley agreed to retire to the Senate to make way for Jack Pickersgill, who would take over his seat and the job of representing Newfoundland in the federal cabinet. Bradley was glad to be out of active politics. He rarely if ever spoke in the Senate, though he devoted a good deal of time to the committee on divorce, and spent long periods at Bonavista. His letters from the period contain frequent and lengthy castigations of Smallwood, Pickersgill and others, as well as gloomy disquisitions on the state of Liberalism, morality and the United Church.

In essence, Bradley disliked the Liberal party's move to the left, and the introduction of the welfare state. Unemployment insurance and other handouts had produced far too much featherbedding. Liberals had descended into "the muddy waters of socialist subsidization" and elections had become little more than "slave auctions." The growth of state power and social services gave, he thought, all the responsibilities to the state and none to the individual. Rewards and incentives were disappearing, and "The *duties of man* have been smothered by the *rights of man*" (Bradley to R.J. Smith 17 April 1958; to Senator Ross macDonald 28 August 1962, BP). In Newfoundland he saw fishermen mired in "plunder and sloth" (Bradley to B. Swyers 2 June 1955, BP) and a lazy, ill-informed electorate only too ready to vote for Smallwood, "A truckling politician, with no ability except as a propagan-

dist, ready to buy any and every influence to feed his own ego, and to betray everything he pretends to revere for the same purpose" (Bradley to G. Sellars 5 March 1956, BP).

For all his social conservatism, however, Bradley was appalled by Smallwood's handling of the International Woodworkers of America (IWA) strike in 1959. He was no great friend of unions, but had long believed that Newfoundland loggers needed a strong union to stand up to the paper companies, and felt instinctively that both they and the IWA deserved fair treatment. This Smallwood had denied in a display of megalomania and manipulation:

> Smallwood, the great labour tout, deserted the labour pals over whom he had shed so many hypocritical tears over the years, and jumped on the bandwagon of the capitalists . . . . The bowing of the knee to Baal by the *PEOPLE'S REPRESENTATIVES* (save the mark) is perhaps explainable on the basis of mass hysteria operating upon panic stricken rabbit brains. And they all dutifully stood up to be counted . . . on Joey's Company bills to outlaw a Union . . . . This Union which could stand up to the Companies was outlawed by Joey, the great Union Man, in favour of his own new dummy organization headed by his flunkey Lane. At the same time Joey received from his stooge members full authority to outlaw any other union to which he conceived a dislike. Honestly I could hardly believe the news when I heard it.
>
> (Bradley to C. Chard 16 May 1959, BP)

At the same time, he refused to support Smallwood over the Term 29 review of the province's financial position. Smallwood had asked for an annual federal grant of $15 million, but Diefenbaker, in March, 1959, offered only $8 million for three years. Smallwood launched a major campaign against Diefenbaker and called a provincial election on the issue. Bradley thought there was little point in the federal government throwing money to a corrupt and profligate regime and was deeply embarrassed by Smallwood's attacks on Diefenbaker and the federal Tories. Could the issue not be, as well, a red herring to divert Newfoundlanders' attention away from anti-union legislation? Smallwood, Bradley thought, had effectively demonstrated his command of the technique of the big lie (Bradley to W. J. Abbott 11 November 1959, BP).

Heart trouble began to plague Bradley in the early 1960s. He spent less and less time in Ottawa and died at Bonavista in 1966. What is one to make of the man and his career? Neither is easy to summarize and assess. He started life equipped with sound education, keen intelligence, great ability as a speaker and debater, and his fair share of ambition. There was in him also a strong streak of the crusader, a compulsion to attempt to rectify injustices where he saw them, and a close identification with the needs of Newfoundland's workers, though this was hampered by the limits he thought should be placed on state action. Given these qualities, he might have been expected to have a very prominent career, perhaps rising to the premiership or a seat on the bench. But there were elements in his character which militated against this. He had a caustic tongue which gave voice to strong principles, moral

scrupulousness, and firm opinions. He never suffered those whom he considered fools — and there were many of them — gladly. Though gregarious — witness his active involvement with Masons, Oddfellows and Orangemen — and a fine raconteur, he lacked flexibility, the ability to compromise and to be a good party man. Moreover, he was a reluctant politician and was never fully at home in the rough and tumble of political life, especially after 1945 when he found the overall trends in social policy deeply distasteful. He was never a trimmer, and this often set him against those with the power to advance his career. He opposed the overall movement towards conservative, mercantile government in the twenties; the introduction of Commission government; the Commission itself; and, lastly, Smallwood. It should also be noted that the very introduction of Commission government effectively ended his hopes of normal political advancement at a time when he was in his prime. His initial ambitions faded and he became to a degree embittered, resentful that his country had not seen fit to use his undoubted talents to its advantage, while promoting others whom he regarded as less worthy into positions of power and influence.

It was an idiosyncratic career, which distanced him from the capital and its elites, who did not understand him. Why should a potentially brilliant lawyer exile himself to Bonavista? Why would he buck every trend? Was he really so clever, or was he merely a drifter with a tendency to laziness? Bradley eventually did not really care what the elite thought about him, though he would probably have accepted the judgement that he had been a failure in public life. As he wrote to Arthur Mifflin (later Chief Justice) in 1964:

> From my viewpoint this is hardly an Horatio Alger story, and I erred egregiously when I stepped into the political field; I was a reasonably successful lawyer up to that time, but I chose to follow a star and failed to reach it, whether from lack of ability or political acumen, the curious workings of intra and inter denominational prejudices and double-crossings, the inconsiderate acts of some judges in passing from the earthly scene at inappropriate times, just plain stupidity, or a combination of one or more of all these factors, does not matter now. The fact is that I failed.
>
> (2 September 1964, BP.)

In the history of 20th century Newfoundland, however, Bradley deserves a larger place than he has been accorded hitherto. He deserves recognition for his principled opposition to the suspension of responsible government in 1933; for his attempt to assist the loggers and, indeed, all the workers of rural Newfoundland in the period up to 1939; for his raising of the question of confederation long before Smallwood had been converted; and above all, for his role in bringing about confederation between 1946 and 1949. As George Sellars wrote to him,

> You had the ability and talent to envision just the trend things should take; Smallwood had the ability to interpret your ideas very well, and put them over.

> I think the most remarkable thing that resulted was the way you handled Smallwood, in coaching him and keeping him on the right track . . . . Smallwood has changed, very materially; he has developed into a very different man from what he was years ago, and unquestionably it is . . . your straightforward, blunt way of coaching him that has produced such results . . . . I hope the results achieved will be permanent.(3 December 1949, BP.)

That was written in 1949, before the gulf opened between the two leading confederates, and in later years Bradley might not have taken these remarks as a compliment. But there is much truth in Sellars' opinion. Bradley played an essential role as strategist, adviser, negotiator and figurehead. Without him, Smallwood would have had a far harder task. They were a team, no matter what each might have thought privately about the other. The fact that Bradley was overshadowed by Smallwood after 1947 should not lead historians to neglect a significant career.

NOTES

[1]The papers are in the possession of Mr. Gordon Bradley of Bonavista, to whom I am grateful for access and for permission to print excerpts in this essay. The collection is cited in this paper as BP.

[2]Bradley to Hope Simpson 11 February 1935; Bradley to *Newfoundland Lumberman*, 16 February 1940, BP. It has been said that Smallwood has claimed to be the effective author of the logging report. There is no evidence in the Bradley papers to support this claim, which is contested by the Bradley family.

[3]Webb 118. Smallwood claims he drafted Bradley's resignation speech (*I Chose Canada* 273). There is, however, a copy of the speech in Bradley's handwriting in his papers.

[4]Bradley to A.E. Hawkins 4 October 1949, BP. There are some copies of the Orange letter in Bradley's papers, one of them in his handwriting. Bradley was present at the Grand Falls meeting where the Orange letter was composed.

REFERENCES

Bradley, David. "An Analysis of The Life and Career of F. Gordon Bradley." MS. Department of History, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1983.

Bradley, F. Gordon. Private Papers, in the possession of Mr. Gordon Bradley, Bonavista, Newfoundland.

Bridle, Paul, ed. *Documents on Relations Between Canada and Newfoundland*, vol. 2, 1940-49. Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1983-4.

Fishermen's Advocate, 1941-3.

Gwyn, Richard. *Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972.

Hobson, J.A. *Imperialism: A Study*. London, 1902.

MacKenzie, David. *Inside the Atlantic Triangle: Canada and the Entrance of Newfoundland into Confederation, 1939-1949*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986.

Neary, Peter. "The Bradley Report on Logging Operations in Newfoundland, 1934: A Suppressed Document." *Labour/Le Travail* 16 (1985), 193-232.

Newfoundland Lumberman, 1940.

Pickersgill, John W. *My Years with Louis St. Laurent: A Political Memoir*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975.

Proceedings of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland. 1926-33.

St. Laurent, Louis. Papers. National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

Smallwood, Joseph R. *I Chose Canada*. Toronto: MacMillan, 1973.

_____ . "The Story of Confederation." In *The Book of Newfoundland*, vol. 3. Ed. J.R. Smallwood. St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Ltd., 1967, 4-32.

Webb, J.A. "Newfoundland's National Convention, 1946-48." Diss. Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1987.