

## Recurrent Issues: Newfoundland Politics and Identity

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## **Recurrent Issues: Newfoundland Politics and Identity**

RECURRENT, PERSISTENT, CYCLICAL, HABITUAL, PERPETUAL – these are some examples of frequently used words for describing various issues in Newfoundland and Labrador. Whether the particular problem is political, economic, or even identity-based, it is probable that it mirrors a previous (and more likely not effectively dealt with) concern that plagued the polity.<sup>1</sup> The current economic, political, and identity related matters within the province are not dissimilar to those that existed prior to Newfoundland's union with Canada, nor to those that continued or have materialized since Confederation.

Newfoundland and Labrador's most predominant grievances have remained the same over the course of its colonialist history. The need for economic diversification to help with boom-bust economic cycles, the overreliance on a single industry (whether that be the fishery or oil and gas), the problem of outmigration, the need and desire to control its own affairs, the use and abuse of Labrador by the island portion of the province, rebuffing more powerful external influences, and union with Canada have routinely been central in Newfoundland and Labrador politics.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Newfoundlanders have had a tendency to prefer more populist, nationalist politicians – those who promote a platform of securing the best deal for Newfoundland, whether that

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- 1 Some examples would be Newfoundland's multiple financial crises such as the 1894 bank crash, the financial and cultural impact of the 1992 Cod Moratorium, and the recent threat of bankruptcy that necessitated the Premier's Economic Recovery Team (<https://thebigresetnl.ca/>). As well, the contentious "megaprojects" such as the Newfoundland Railway, the Sprung Greenhouse, and the Churchill Falls and Muskrat Falls hydroelectric developments are indicative of this pattern. The recent publications by James K. Hiller and Raymond B. Blake and Melvin Baker reviewed here highlight some of these events that occurred between the later 19th century and 1949.
  - 2 Throughout this essay, I will predominately use "Newfoundland" rather than "Newfoundland and Labrador" as the official name was "Newfoundland" until December 2001 when the Canadian Constitution was amended to officially change the name of the province to "Newfoundland and Labrador" and the vast majority of the period discussed here was prior to 2001.

be maintaining its independence, joining Canada, advocating for megaprojects, or strong-arming intergovernmental negotiations.

In conjunction with the politically and economically driven problems within Newfoundland, there are also long-held concerns over Newfoundland's distinct identity and the protection of that identity as part of Canada. For example, during the First World War Newfoundland soldiers experienced this particular worry as they were concerned with being confused with Canadian soldiers – much like Canadians being unhappily mistaken for Americans. As well, in its early post-Confederation period there was a cultural revival in the newest Canadian province that echoed the desire to remain distinct from their now-fellow Canadians. The distinction between “Newfoundland” and “Labrador” identities should also be noted as each contains particular subsets of identities distinct to their locale, such as the “townie-bayman” divide in Newfoundland. This review essay, for the most part, addresses the political identity situation on the island portion of the province while acknowledging that Labrador has recurrently presented a variety of issues for the Newfoundland government despite people of Labrador often lacking adequate agency when those matters are addressed, not to mention the scholarly examination of such issues.<sup>3</sup>

Two recently published works of Newfoundland's political history conspicuously engage with such recurrent political, economic, and, to a lesser extent, identity issues. Raymond B. Blake and Melvin Baker's *Where Once They Stood* and James K. Hiller's *Robert Bond: A Political Biography* provide retellings of some familiar narratives in Newfoundland's political history, primarily focused on 19th- and early 20th-century high politics, the political elite, and, especially in the case of Blake and Baker, Newfoundland's union with Canada.<sup>4</sup> Each book brings forth a wealth of historical examples of Newfoundland's persistent political and financial problems as well as an

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3 Labradorians' feelings of lacking adequate agency within the province were expressed and discussed in the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada, *What We Heard* (St. John's: Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada, 2003), 8, 15 as well as the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening our Place in Canada and Ryan Research and Communications, “Provincial Opinion Study,” *Our Place in Canada: Main Report* (St. John's: Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening our Place in Canada, 2003), 394–5, 452–6 (<https://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/royalcomm/finalreport/pdf/Final.pdf>). See also Shannon Conway, *National Project, Regional Perspective: Newfoundland, Canada and Identities, 1949–1991* (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 2020), 305–15 (<http://hdl.handle.net/10393/0996>).

4 Raymond B. Blake and Melvin Baker, *Where Once They Stood: Newfoundland's Rocky Road towards Confederation* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2019); James K. Hiller, *Robert Bond: A Political Biography* (St. John's: ISER Books, 2019).

underlying reiteration of the difficulties of maintaining an identity as a smaller nation within a larger national entity, whether that is Great Britain or Canada. While neither work focuses on identity, the concept remains central in that identity always underlies the issues and events that occur in society. Hence, Newfoundland identity (its political and national identities as opposed to the cultural) plays a role in both books as identity is entrenched within political and societal affairs; thereby these works offer more than what is evident in their titular assertions.

James K. Hiller, a Newfoundland historian with a scholarly career dating back to the early 1970s, joined Memorial University of Newfoundland's Department of History in 1972. This political biography of Sir Robert Bond, Newfoundland's eleventh premier (Liberal, 1900-1907) and first prime minister (Liberal, 1907-1909) primarily focuses on Bond's political career and legacy while showcasing Newfoundland's turbulent political and economic history from 1882 until 1914. Hiller restricts the scope to political analysis in an attempt to explain "what happened in the colony's public life" during Bond's political career and the "important role" he played therein in order to determine the extent to which Bond lived up to his posthumous reputation of being "Newfoundland's only statesman." This approach is followed throughout the work, with Hiller never losing focus on Bond the politician, whether in government, leading government, or in opposition, and he artfully demonstrates the extent to which Bond was a "colonial nationalist" who wanted the best for Newfoundland.<sup>5</sup>

Compared to previous biographies of Bond, Hiller's work provides much more depth regarding his political career and legacy. The sense of "Bond the politician" is center-stage and as such the reader feels a more direct connection to Bond through Hiller's portrayal when contrasted with other biographical sketches of the man. Melvin Baker and Peter Neary's 1999 biographical article on Bond succinctly covers the breadth of his life, including his political career, business affairs, and the more familial and personal aspects of his life and death, meaning that only a cursory glance of the political aspects of his life are considered in contrast to Hiller's political biography of Bond.<sup>6</sup> Unlike in Baker and Neary's article, Hiller's book is more organized due to its prescribed focus. Instead of exploring the wider context of Bond's life, you

5 Hiller, *Robert Bond*, 3, 16-7.

6 Melvin Baker and Peter Neary, "Sir Robert Bond (1857-1927): A Biographical Sketch," *Newfoundland Studies* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 1-54.

get to know him more fully as a political figure. Hiller does not disregard the complexities of Bond's life, but instead compartmentalizes his life by mostly putting aside the business aspects and restricting the personal areas of Bond's life to the introductory and concluding chapters. In the introduction, Hiller immediately questions the value of the political biography genre and whether another on Bond is needed. Moreover, Hiller's examination of this genre of historical writing is admirable and he acknowledges the disdain for biography in academic discussion but the popularity of it for wider audiences. Yet while he demonstrates his awareness of the limitations of the genre, which focuses on one individual rather than the whole of society, Hiller pushes past this central concern and effectively places Bond within his context.

While focused on an individual, the work provides an effective and detailed study of the political and even economic history of late-19th- and early-20th-century Newfoundland. With this, Hiller provides the context of Bond's full political life, his failings and his successes, such as with the battles over French and American fishing rights as well as the challenge presented by William Coaker and the Fishermen's Protective Union during the later stages of his political career. The book proves to be an effective political history of Newfoundland during the turn of the 20th century, albeit centered on Bond and his various and changing roles in that history. In this work, Hiller brings together key elements of two genres of historical writing – political and biographical – by exploring this period of Newfoundland's political history through the political career of one man.

Through well-documented research, particularly Hiller's use of colonial and Newfoundland government records, newspapers, and Bond's personal papers, this work presents an informed narrative on a particularly contentious period of Newfoundland political history and largely from the perspective of an elite politician. While other scholars have provided worthy narratives of this era of Newfoundland political history, Hiller offers a new perspective through focusing on an individual to encapsulate the period and its political events.<sup>7</sup> The reader witnesses the intricacies and complexities of the politics of

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7 See Kurt Korieski, *Conflicted Colony: Critical Episodes in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland and Labrador* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016); Sean T. Cadigan, *Death on Two Fronts: National Tragedies and the Fate of Democracy in Newfoundland, 1914-1934* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2013); James Hiller and Peter Neary, eds., *Newfoundland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Essays in Interpretation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); David G. Alexander, "Development and Dependence in Newfoundland, 1880-1970," *Acadiensis* 4, no. 1 (Autumn 1974): 3-31; Rosemary E. Ommer, "All the Fish of the Post: Property Rights and Development in

the period from an insider's perspective through Bond, permitting a deeper understanding of the both the high (i.e., international relations) and low (i.e., economic affairs) politics of the era, as well as a greater understanding of those in the seats of power who largely determined the lives of Newfoundlanders. This insider's view of the high politics of such an eventful period in Newfoundland history draws readers into what can be, in some accounts, dry and meticulous subject matter that is void of a more personal connection.

Raymond B. Blake and Melvin Baker have long and notable careers as historians of Newfoundland. Blake's successful academic career focusing on Canadian and Newfoundland political history has led to his professorship at the University of Regina and election to the Royal Society of Canada in 2018. Baker, formerly an archivist-historian for Memorial University of Newfoundland, has many publications focused on 19th- and 20th-century Newfoundland history. In *Where Once They Stood*, Blake and Baker put forth an argument that Newfoundlanders chose to join Canada in 1948 just as they chose not to join Canada during earlier Confederation debates. Due to the changing nature of Newfoundlanders' attitudes towards Confederation between the 1860s and the 1940s, there has been considerable debate both historiographically and in the collective memory (or popular history) of how and why Newfoundland joined Canada – whether or not it truly was a choice on the part of Newfoundlanders or a conspiracy orchestrated by Great Britain and Canada.

As there have been many publications that address Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada, several of which by the authors themselves, Blake and Baker are not offering something particularly new.<sup>8</sup> However, what

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a Nineteenth Century Inshore Fishery," *Acadiensis* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 107-23; and James K. Hiller's earlier and extensive collection of work on late-19th- and early-20th-century Newfoundland political history, including "The Railway and Local Politics in Newfoundland, 1870-1901," in *Newfoundland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. James Hiller and Peter Neary (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 123-47 and Hiller, "The 1985 Newfoundland-Canada Confederation Negotiations: A Reconsideration," *Acadiensis* 40, no. 1 (Fall 2011): 94-111.

8 James K. Hiller, ed., *The Confederation Issue in Newfoundland, 1864-1869: Selected Documents* (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1974); Raymond B. Blake, *Canadians at Last: Canada Integrates Newfoundland as a Province* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Sean T. Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Peter Neary, "Newfoundland's Union with Canada: Conspiracy or Choice?," *Acadiensis* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 110-19; Jeff A. Webb, "Confederation, Conspiracy, and Choice: A Discussion," *Newfoundland Studies* 14, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 169-87; Greg Malone, *Don't Tell the Newfoundlanders: The True Story of Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2012); David Mackenzie, "The Terms of Union in Historical Perspective," *Newfoundland Studies* 14, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 220-37; Melvin Baker, "Falling into the Canadian Lap: The Confederation of Newfoundland and Canada, 1945-1949," in *Collected Research Papers of the Royal*

they provide is a St. John's-centered take on the more-than-80-year-long Confederation debate in a neat and clearly articulated volume that provides an analysis of the largely political history of Newfoundland's union with Canada. The authors are quick to rightfully give Newfoundlanders the agency they are denied in arguments that present Confederation as a conspiracy committed by Great Britain and Canada against the will of Newfoundlanders.<sup>9</sup> Blake and Baker reinforce the argument that Newfoundlanders made the choice to join Canada in 1948, just as they made the choice to remain independent in 1869.<sup>10</sup>

Regarding the significant divide in the historical writing on Newfoundland's union with Canada, generally presented as either being an act of conspiracy or choice, Blake and Baker's work is clearly on the side of choice and they make a strong case for it while also highlighting differences in regional concerns and political opinion regarding the potential union. The authors effectively lay out the Confederation process and provide a robust narrative of how Newfoundland came to join Canada, taking the story back to the initial Canadian Confederation talks in 1864 and demonstrating how it continued to be a predominant aspect of the political discussion in Newfoundland until the union of 1949. Due to the close proximity of Newfoundland to Canada and their shared relationship with Great Britain, the proposal of union between the two was routinely on the table – especially during times of financial difficulty for Newfoundland and/or Great Britain. In stressing the continuity of the Confederation issue, Blake and Baker demystify the long and contentious episode in Newfoundland's history in an attempt to put the conspiracy side of the debate firmly to rest; while this approach has long been the case for academic historians, it stands in rather sharp contrast to more popular literature, such as Greg Malone's *Don't Tell the Newfoundlanders*,

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*Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada*, ed. Victor L. Young and Melvin Baker (St. John's: Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada, 2003); Melvin Baker and Peter Neary, "Negotiating Final Terms of Union with Canada: The Memorandum Submitted by the Newfoundland Delegation, 13 October 1948," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 33, no. 2 (Fall 2018): 459–506.

9 Malone, *Don't Tell the Newfoundlanders*.

10 Blake and Baker, *Where Once They Stood*, xi–xii. Newfoundlanders made the choice to join Canada in 1948 through two referendums held on the matter in June and July 1948; see Blake and Baker, *Where Once They Stood*, 284–8. In 1869 they elected an anti-Confederation government, making their choice clear regarding whether or not to join Canada at that time; see Blake and Baker, *Where Once They Stood*, 58–60.

which has further promulgated the notion that Newfoundlanders were duped (by Britain and Canada) into joining Canada.<sup>11</sup>

Blake and Baker offer an explanation for why Newfoundlanders initially rejected Confederation in the later 19th century but in 1948 (at least by a slight majority) came to embrace union with Canada. The authors argue it was a shift in mentality that ultimately changed how Newfoundlanders perceived joining Canada: no longer was it seen as giving up their nation, but instead it was safeguarding their society. In the immediate postwar period, Blake and Baker posit that there was a notable global shift in how people understood citizenship, moving away from a civic idea of citizenship to a social understanding of citizenship wherein a government should take care of its citizenry. Newfoundlanders saw this idea of social citizenship reflected in the Canadian government but not in the Newfoundland governments they were familiar with (whether under responsible government after 1855 or after achieving Dominion status in 1907), and, as such, their opinions of union with Canada changed accordingly. While this study does not provide something especially unique pertaining to the history of the debates concerning Newfoundland and Confederation – though it does offer a more expanded explanation of why Newfoundlanders voted to join Canada in 1948 in contrast to previous efforts – it is a cohesive, coherent, and convincing analysis of the lengthy period of political events and debates that led to Newfoundland's union with Canada.

The two books share some significant and key themes. Firstly, there are the many recurrent political and economic dilemmas faced by Newfoundland. Each study highlights the ever-present concerns of economic development and difficulties of international relations in pre-Confederation Newfoundland. Secondly, the prominence of Confederation in Newfoundland politics from the 1860s to the 1940s is apparent in both works. And each of the books highlights Newfoundlanders' agency in their political past; yet, nevertheless, both books are quite top-down, political elite-driven narratives.

Hiller effectively demonstrates the particular political and economic challenges that Newfoundland faced during the later 19th and early 20th centuries by taking the reader through many episodes that document the Dominion's search for economic diversification to help with boom-bust economic cycles, as well as the desire for Newfoundland to control its own

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11 Neary, "Newfoundland's Union with Canada: Conspiracy or Choice?"; Webb, "Confederation, Conspiracy, and Choice: A Discussion"; Malone, *Don't Tell the Newfoundlanders*.



affairs while it contested powerful influence from Great Britain, Canada, France, and the United States. Jurisdictional rights pertaining to the French Treaty Shore, American fishing rights, Confederation with Canada, the use and abuse of Labrador (for example, the potential of selling the territory to Quebec), and other matters are highlighted across both Hiller's and Blake and Baker's narratives. This not only indicates the predominance of such significant political and economic issues in Newfoundland, but it also demonstrates how these episodes (and others) were persistent throughout the period.<sup>12</sup> With that said, external affairs were far from the only issues that beleaguered Newfoundland and exacerbated its already dire circumstances during the turn of the 20th century. As such, there is much discussion in both works of the 1892 Great Fire in St. John's, the 1894 bank crash, the difficulties of railway expansion, and the role these and other issues played regarding the economic situation in Newfoundland.<sup>13</sup>

The most persistent political issue for Newfoundland from the 1860s through the 1940s was the possibility of union with Canada. Apart from some economic boom periods after the First World War and Second World War, the fiscal situation remained grim in Newfoundland throughout the first half of the 20th century. This ultimately led Great Britain to establish a Commission of Government in Newfoundland through which Britain largely managed the governance and financial affairs of the Dominion of Newfoundland from 1934 until union with Canada in 1949.<sup>14</sup> Confederation was effectively avoided until 1949 predominantly because of Newfoundlanders' desire to maintain their independence. But after the afore-mentioned shift in mentality after the Second World War, joining Canada became a much more desirable option for many Newfoundlanders. Independence was no longer seen by many citizens as the best way to ensure the survival of Newfoundland and its people, but rather union with Canada and sharing in its modern conception of citizenry that provided more for their citizens was the way forward.<sup>15</sup>

From the 1860s to the 1940s, Confederation was often presented as a solution to Newfoundland's habitual economic problems. Yet politicians regularly accused opponents of being pro-Confederation, using this as a tactic to discredit them during elections and contentious political episodes as not

12 Hiller, *Robert Bond*, 46, 71; Blake and Baker, *Where Once They Stood*, 73–6.

13 Hiller, *Robert Bond*, 154; Blake and Baker, *Where Once They Stood*, x.

14 Blake and Baker, *Where Once They Stood*, 157.

15 Blake and Baker, *Where Once They Stood*, 157, 80.

being “true” Newfoundlanders, which worked in favour of the more nationalist leaders as both books effectively depict.<sup>16</sup> The centrality of Confederation in Newfoundland politics, from the pre-Confederation era to the postwar era (and up to the present), has shaped and continues to shape Newfoundland identity. The relationship between Newfoundland and the government of Great Britain and Canada’s federal government is fraught with perceived challenges to its identity, much like Canadian concerns over American influence and similar to Quebec’s concerns over the protection of their language and culture from the perceived monolith of English Canada.

Such political and economic issues, especially when they become cyclical as they have been in Newfoundland, can significantly shape identity and affect the decisions made about how to overcome difficulties. Many Newfoundlanders have an oversimplified shared belief of being a people beaten down by generations of numerous difficulties and hardships, which can lead to a population with a defeatist attitude and ultimately lead to the avoidance of adequately dealing with problems; but such a situation can also foster a defiant national identity. A large swath of Newfoundland’s history and historiography predominately tells a narrative of oppression and hardship, with Newfoundlanders either “haunted” by their difficult past or romanticising “a past that never actually existed.” A belief of being tethered to an historic cycle of “economic failure and social misery” often led Newfoundlanders to be fond of rather populist and patriotic leaders who try to secure the best deal for Newfoundland, whether that is independence, megaprojects, or Confederation (depending on the context of the situation).<sup>17</sup>

Identity is central to everything in that it underlies the issues and events that took place within Newfoundland society – from the troubles presented by foreign influence to the challenges that accompany economic difficulties and especially to leaving independence behind to join with a larger nation-state. As such, the arguments and evidence in both Hiller’s and Blake and Baker’s accounts present research problems that link the histories of Newfoundland politics and identity. Many of Newfoundland’s central political, economic, and ultimately identity-based issues are also persistent, and each book provides not only clear examples of such issues but also how they are persistent from

16 Blake and Baker, *Where Once They Stood*, 2; Hiller, *Robert Bond*, 20–5, 165, 324.

17 Jerry Bannister, “Making History: Cultural Memory in Twentieth-Century Newfoundland,” *Newfoundland Studies* 18, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 177–80; Hiller, *Robert Bond*, 21; Blake and Baker, *Where Once They Stood*, xi, 71–2.

at least the 1860s until 1949 (and thereafter). Each narrative reinforces the understanding that Newfoundland's problems are recurrent and demonstrate how the political, economic, and identity-based issues are often intertwined.

Each study unintentionally highlights the interconnectedness of politics and identity, particularly religious (often seen as ethnic) identity, but they also note the differences between St. John's and the rest of the Island population. While each book is predominately focused to the administrative and political centre of St. John's, there are regional concerns and political opinions evident across their narratives, noted, for example, in the elections and politicking on display during Bond's political career and the outcome of the 1948 referendums votes on Confederation.<sup>18</sup> Newfoundlanders on the Avalon Peninsula are believed to have been more attached to the state due to having ardently fought for responsible government in the past. In contrast, those living outside St. John's and the surrounding area did not interact with the government as much and, according to Blake and Baker, "envisioned a different future for themselves."<sup>19</sup> There is a tendency to apply the opinions of those in St. John's to the entirety of the island, politically and otherwise, when this has been shown to be anything but the case, and each book attempts to depict that difference including the divisions within the St. John's population itself. The various regions within Newfoundland had political and economic challenges and influences pertinent to their locale that differed from those in St. John's, and because of this the government often had difficulty establishing their authority outside of the Avalon Peninsula.

Politics and identity are deeply intertwined in the Newfoundland context. As evidenced in the numerous elections, political campaigns, and governance problems described in both Hiller's and Blake and Baker's narratives, identity played a central role in such situations – particularly religious identity – but there was (and still is) also the issue of St. John's versus the rest of the Island.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, various forms of nationalisms (political, economic, and cultural) have often presented themselves in Newfoundland politics and society – often working in tandem for the believed betterment of Newfoundland. As noted above, in the post-Confederation period an increase in cultural nationalism known as the Cultural Revival took place beginning in the 1960s. Following this, there were periods of increased political and economic nationalism (in

18 Hiller, *Robert Bond*, 130–50, 328, 408; Blake and Baker, *Where Once They Stood*, 284–5.

19 Blake and Baker, *Where Once They Stood*, 285.

20 Hiller, *Robert Bond*, 18; Blake and Baker, *Where Once They Stood*, 77–9.

conjunction with the ever-present cultural nationalism) as exhibited by the province's premiers and governments during the 1970s and 1980s. This led to increased government support for the cultural movement in the province that, in turn, helped entrench a distinct identity in the province while it became part of Canada.<sup>21</sup>

These recent publications reveal that the many political, economic, and underlying identity issues in Newfoundland are more often than not reiterations (or simply continuations) of earlier ones, helping the reader to better understand the province's turbulent political and economic history. While separately addressing the subjects of Robert Bond and union with Canada, both works contribute to the understanding of not only the aforementioned topics but also the cyclical nature of many of Newfoundland's political and economic problems and circumstances. Blake and Baker successfully argue that the societal context had shifted between the first vote on Confederation in 1869 and the one that brought Newfoundland into Canada in 1949, thereby acknowledging the agency of Newfoundlanders in having made sound decisions and doing what they believed to be best for them in both instances. While doing this, however, the authors present Confederation as inevitable and, as such, the events leading up to that conclusion are then evaluated from that perspective; this is problematic. As for Hiller, while his study provides a high level of detail in his retelling of Newfoundland's late-19th- and early-20th- century political history, the biography is not a burdensome read. Despite this, some repetition of detailed accounts (such as election campaigns and economic challenges) occur throughout and this can be somewhat of a detraction from the main narrative. Hiller sought out to determine whether Bond was a man worth of remembrance and effectively delivers an account that illustrates Bond's steadfastness and stalwart behaviour in wanting the best for Newfoundland, which for him meant maintaining its independence. Hiller, though, importantly reminds us that Bond should not be mythologized or have his impact exaggerated.<sup>22</sup>

Both Hiller's and Blake and Baker's works remind us that Newfoundland and Labrador's current economic and political quandaries are not without precedent, which makes these recent publications all the more timely. Each book offers valuable a contribution to Newfoundland political history and reminds readers through a wealth of historic examples that many political and

21 Conway, *National Project, Regional Perspective*.

22 Blake and Baker, *Where Once They Stood*, x-xi; Hiller, *Robert Bond*, 463.

economic concerns in the province are emblematic, or are a continuation, of earlier problems – and that this recurrence of difficulties without adequate solution continues to shape Newfoundland’s identity. Whether through an examination of Sir Robert Bond’s political career or the long history of Newfoundland’s relationship with Canada, each study explores a series of political, economic, and underlying identity-based issues in Newfoundland’s political and social history that were a continuation of Newfoundland’s past problems – problems that have continued to the present day.

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