

The Maritimes



NOT even their most ardent advocates would seriously urge that the Maritime Provinces of Canada (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland) rank high on the lists of Social Pioneers. The 1½ million inhabitants of this most easterly area of Canada, who think Conservative but fairly consistently vote Liberal, take seriously Alexander Pope's advice, "Be not the first by whom the new are tried; nor yet the last to lay the old aside"—they are content to allow others to do the experimenting and collect the headaches, but when they discover something that's *good* they move in fast and quietly annex it.

So it was with AA in this area — for although there were "loners" before 1947 it was not until that year that the first group in the Maritimes was organized and registered with the Foundation—(New Glasgow, N.S. in January 1947). When the AA tide struck, however, it struck with all the force of a "rip" on the Peticodiac. In keeping with the paradox of AA "coincidences" the Message of AA came almost simultaneously not from one direction but from at least four with little or no connection between them. The furthest came first. Christmas, 1946, Fred P. of the New Orleans Group visited his home town of New Glasgow, N.S. for the first time since he found

Eastward to Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. Islands of great harbors... and harbor now for fifty-one AA groups. AA jutting out into the storms of the sea...



the Program in the South. He passed on the message to some of his boyhood friends. Then by a two-line personal in the local paper he collected a dozen or so who were willing to admit they had a problem and wanted "out." Before Fred left just after New Years 1947 the first Maritime Group meeting had been held.

Next came Prince Edward Island. Here in the spring of '47 Walter B. Of Charlottetown, who had received his inspiration in (or from) Toronto, rounded up a handful of "Spud-Islanders" who had reached the "necessary degree of desperation," and Charlottetown and Summerside duly made their appearance on the AA Maritime map. Now Moncton, N.B. — in July of 1947 Claire C. of Montreal, descended on this city. Aided by some local friends who had earlier spotted some likely "prospects," she planted a group in the Railroad Hub of the Maritimes. It flourished and grew from the start. (This was "repayment in kind" since some two or three years earlier the Fellowship in Montreal and been firmly established largely through two "transplanted" Maritimers, Dave B. of St. John and Jack P. of Halifax.) Last in this chronology of historic 1947 comes the "Eastern Canadian Port" of World War II - Halifax, N.S. It might have been "First in the East" because two or three had gathered together in the summer and fall of 1946 — but

Christmas and New Years proved too much of a hurdle and the incipient group died a-borning. It was not until nearly a year later that Al M. (whose interest had been kindled by literature sent by his sister from Brockton, Mass.) made the "grand tour" of Montreal, Brockton, Boston and New York. Al caught the spark and after his return to Halifax he rounded up the "two or three" of 1946, recruited others. Before year's end regular meetings were being held. Early in 1948, Bill F. the Sage of 24th Street, New York, spent a whirlwind week in Halifax and the group was well launched. To this day Bill is quoted in Halifax and one of their favorite is "When you start taking bows in this outfit look out 'cause you're apt to bow yourself right into the spittoon." That makes for humility.

The year 1948 was one of expansion and consolidation with Moncton and Halifax spearheading the new groups in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia — with Maine and Montreal helping out in the Border areas. To mention only a few, St. John, Fredericton, Edmondston, Bathurst and Campbelltown in New Brunswick joined the fold. Yarmouth, Bridgewater, Antigonish, Kentville and Truro got under way in Nova Scotia. Three groups were added on the "Island" and in October of that year the "Maritime Intergroup Association" was organized with headquarters at Mon-



ton. This was modeled closely on the New York Intergroup but in operations there was a difference because of geography - since it takes some Maritime delegates *two days* instead of *two hours* to attend the quarterly meetings. As yet, not a word from Newfoundland, the fourth of the Maritime Provinces - well, fittingly enough, the "Oldest Colony" reserved its entrance into AA to coincide with its entrance into Canada. In 1949 the group at Cornerbrook was started by Jerry M., a crusading Cape Breton Irishman, who had qualified for membership in Montreal and joined up in New York. Shortly thereafter a group was organized in St. John's the capital city, and other groups have since got under way in the newest province.

New Orleans, Toronto, New York

Montreal, Brockton, Mass., Houlton, Maine, and Boston - what a "pot pourri" the Program must be "way down East" in the Maritimes with that polyglot variety of foundings - no uniformity, no agreement on what's orthodox, no prescribed ritual. That's right brother — nothing in common save the Big Book and the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions and that Honest Desire which is so essential.

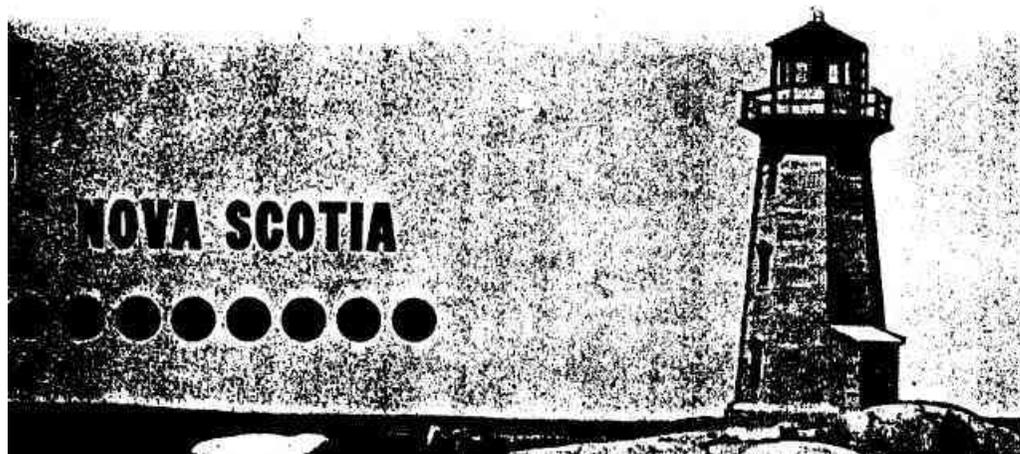
Here's the Maritime AA (Approximately Accurate) Box Score:

Apr. '48 Apr. '51

No. of Groups	6	60*
Members	100	1200

* Not yet including *Sober Island*, off the Guysboro shore where all 19 voters went solidly "wet" in the last provincial liquor referendum.

May 1951



THE editor and publisher, the barrister and solicitor, the agent and sales manager, the druggist and the real estate broker, all five past masters of all degrees of alcoholism, met on the night of April 8th 1948, in sober and solemn mein — thus came into being another group of "Alcoholics Anonymous." Perhaps it is wise not to re-call much of the pre-birth and bearing down pains preceding this advent, suffice to say that the labor was quite excruciating and extended over a long period.

Some time previous to this meeting, a friend in the U.S.A. who was much interested in the welfare of our editor and publisher, sent him a weighty volume entitled "Alcoholics Anonymous." At first glance of this book our editor experienced mingled feelings, mostly cynicism, doubt, scorn and derision. The second glance partly penetrated his alcoholic haze — but just enough to sense some possible amusement

to be had with his boon, bosom and and boozing companions, so he took his book along on his next visit to the druggist who was then in alcoholic consultation with the lawyer - now the ball was rolling and gathering weight — and they promptly sent for the sales manager and the broker — *and then began round one of a championship fight*, Remember, these were men who on awakening in the morning had an "eye-opener" before dressing, then a "bracer" before shaving, next a "pick-me-up" while preparing the coffee, and an "appetizer" before breakfast (if any?) - then after these ceremonies *they had their first drink for the day!* Now they were all set for another day of confusion and frustration.

These were the men who now stood up and before God and their fellow men admitted "that they were powerless over alcohol" and "that their lives had become unmanageable." These men carried on

the local fight, round after round, and are ever on the alert for more contestants.

— *Anonymous, Nova Scotia*

A MEMBER of the Yarmouth AA Group, a man of 53 years, a drinker for at least 30 and definitely an alcoholic for the last 15, after an initial period of membership and sobriety for about three months had the following to say in open meeting: —

"Realizing that I am a very recent convert to the 12 Steps of AA and not at all qualified to lecture or get up in meeting and testify, nevertheless I feel that I should put on paper some of my thoughts and impressions during this early stage. It will serve me as a record to be read over in the future and perhaps will help me to remember the debt of gratitude and loyalty I owe to my fellow ex-drunks for their assistance, both spiritually and materially, in directing my footsteps along the path by which I may regain my status as a decent citizen of my community. Even in the short time since joining I find a great change, both physically and mentally. I awake in the morning in full control of myself and with the determination that this day I will accomplish something worth while, even if it is only another short step along the road to recovery. My appetite for food has bounded back with a bang and I am now able to enjoy a wholesome breakfast - which hasn't happened

to me for several years past. Although the cost of most foodstuffs is rather frightening, I am quite convinced that the cost of eating decently is not within shouting distance of the high over-all costs of drinking. My mentality, it seems to me, is improving.

I am sure my power of concentration is rapidly returning. Recently I have been able to arrive at decisions on different matters which formerly would have rolled back and forth, or up and down in my mind, cursed at, reviled, and finally consigned to some dark recess, preserved in alcohol, for some future day's settlement. Procrastination is certainly a virulent off-spring of alcoholism!!!

The spirit of tolerance, friendship and willing assistance that I find among my fellow AA members is to me a cause for much serious thinking, as well as wonder and amazement. Surely the Grace of God enters here somewhere — not even an unbeliever would be brash enough to deny that.

If, and when, (more procrastination!!) I think myself fit to ask the Almighty for a resumption of diplomatic relations, you may be sure I will humbly and earnestly implore His help and blessings on all AA efforts in re-habilitating our fellow men, as well as render sincere thanks for strength and guidance received in the past."

To which, we all say *Amen.*
— *C.C., Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.*