

## **Through the Eyes of *The Tattler*: Concerns of Baptist Youth in Rural Nova Scotia, 1933-1940**

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In the midst of the economic and social instability of February 1933, a fourteen year-old youngster named Ivan Shortliffe began publishing a paper called *The Tiny Tattler*.<sup>1</sup> Ivan lived in Central Grove, a small hamlet of just over a hundred souls located in the middle of Long Island, Digby County, Nova Scotia. The two villages on either end of Central Grove, Freeport and Tiverton, were fishing ports. Westport on the neighbouring Brier Island was also a fishing-based village. Ivan had the fortune to attend the public school at Central Grove under the direction of the young Florence Tibert. Mrs. Tibert was the daughter of J.J. Wallace, the editor of *The Digby Courier*,<sup>2</sup> and it was Mr. Wallace's gift of a small hand-operated printing press to Ivan that enabled the business venture to begin and flourish for over ten years.

The *Tattler* was a special paper in many ways. First of all, it initially measured 3 by 5 inches and only increased in size in 1939 to become a 6 by 8 inch paper. It was a truly "tiny" source of news and was known as "Canada's Smallest Newspaper." Second, it was printed by a youthful editor with the help of a friend of the same age, Rupert Cann. Furthermore, printing began in the midst of the worst Depression year and yet grew so that Ivan and Rupert could boast of a local, national, and international circulation of over 5000 within the first four years. Both editors were able to support themselves with the income of the paper and its associated job printing while they were completing school and for a few years following. Finally, and of the greatest importance for this essay, Ivan and Rupert were

very active members of the United Baptist Church in Central Grove, and in the church's Sunday School and youth programs. Out of six active churches on these Islands with a population of 1500 people, four of them were Baptist.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the paper included much news about Baptist church activities, youth gatherings, social news, and other happenings locally and elsewhere. In fact, one page entitled, "The Quiet Hour," was devoted to the discussion of religious topics in prose or poetry; this feature can be found in every issue of the paper; Shortliffe saw "The Quiet Hour" as the heart of his newspaper.<sup>4</sup> The *Tattler* is therefore a rich source of social information for anyone interested in capturing a snap-shot of a rural Nova Scotian community and its relationship to the church and of seeing what captured the minds, energies, and time of the young people who lived there. What were young people interested in? What issues made them excited or angry? How did they relate to the church in rural areas? What role did the church play in educating them and helping them gain skills and beliefs to take them through life? What influence did young people have in the community and how were they supported?

This essay will attempt to provide some tentative answers to these questions by analysing and re-producing some of the content of *Tattler* pages. A few of the themes discovered in this newspaper between 1933 and 1940 might be expected or could have been predicted; these would include such issues as temperance, youth unemployment and migration, and peace. However, even the way that these issues were discussed in the *Tattler* might not be anticipated. Yet, other more surprising concerns were also openly discussed, including church leadership, youth training responsibilities of the churches and adults, inter-denominational co-operation, and new relationships and dating. These issues stand amongst many others. A report of this size could only deal comfortably with a few of these matters. Accordingly, this essay will briefly explore what the *Tattler* reveals about inter-church activities during the period, youth-church relationships, the exercise of church youth leadership and training roles, the mood of temperance, and the faces of war and peace. These youthful editors did express their views and attitudes in the columns of the *Tattler*, and I suggest that these views represent one voice – an important voice in attempting to understand the perspective of Baptist youth during the 1930s and early war years in the Maritimes. Other researchers will be left with the task of uncovering other voices and perspectives.

Why is this essay attempting to look at the situation of Baptist youth

through the lens of a local Digby County paper? This is an important question. Principally, work has already been undertaken outlining the development of the Baptist Young Peoples' Unions and related organs from a structural perspective. Robert Alden Colpitts submitted a thesis on "The Maritime BYPU: Through 50 Years" in 1943 as part of his Bachelor of Divinity work at Acadia; it explores the wider movement in great detail from the late-nineteenth century. Paul D. Berry wrote an updated survey of the movement in 1992 entitled, "A Hundred Years Young: The Baptist Young People of the Maritimes." There was no need to duplicate their fine work. Instead, this essay will try to go beyond the organized youth work to attempt to see the faces of young people and their hopes, dreams, and fears. Secondly, while some may not consider Digby County youth representative of rural youth, in general, the *Tattler* does provide a unique source of actual young peoples' words and ideas. This is difficult to find anywhere, especially in official denomination-based papers. Furthermore, few letters, diaries, or other possible sources continue for the span of a decade. As a final reason, readers must be willing to see the importance of local news and reporting.<sup>5</sup> This may be difficult, for not even William H. Kesterton in his seminal book, *A History of Journalism in Canada*, examines the local press.<sup>6</sup> The weekly community newspaper is often viewed as a "lesser press." Its importance is minimized. However, as *The Acadian*, an early Wolfville paper, observed in 1937,

The city papers do not take the place of your local paper, although some seem to think they do . . . You cannot learn from them when public meetings are held, who are dying and who are marrying, who are moving out and who wants to sell land, in fact, hundreds of items which might be of particular importance to you. Such matters city papers cannot furnish, but your local paper does.<sup>7</sup>

There are, of course, limitations to using newspapers as the primary source. Sometimes the issues that are not written about are more important than those that are clean and proper enough to be printed. There is also the danger that news may be one-sided or exaggerated. However, this tiny newspaper is a rich and rare source of dialogue and reporting by two Baptist youth. Readers should be aware of the limitations; this provides context. But, we must be ready to read on and be excited about what we might discover on the pages of "The Shortliffe Press."

***Inter-Church Co-operation***

On 1 November 1935, the Older Boys' Conference of Digby and Annapolis Counties met at Digby. Nearly 50 youth from Middleton, Annapolis Royal, Bridgetown, Digby, Sandy Cove, Bear River, Centreville (Digby), and Central Grove areas attended the conference from United Baptist, United, and perhaps other churches. J. Lloyd Jess of Acadia University was in charge of the event.<sup>8</sup> Edward MacDormand was appointed Grand Praetor of the conference, and Ivan Shortliffe was appointed Deputy Grand Praetor. The theme of the event focused on two areas: "The boy that God needs" and "the God that boys need." As we can see from their comments, this conference made a striking impression on sixteen year-old Ivan and Rupert Cann:

The Conference closed by a Fellowship Circle, each boy clasping hands in silent prayer. Every boy left the church feeling something new and wonderful within him – something he shall never forget. And yet it was with a sad heart that each boy said good-bye to the new friends he had made and started for their homes, hoping that some day, some where, they might meet again.<sup>9</sup>

This article highlights the existence of inter-denominational co-operation in youth work during the period. Organized Baptist youth ministry on a convention-wide basis had collapsed in the same year that Regular and Freewill Baptists had accomplished their union in the Maritime Provinces (by 1907). The situation may not have been better in other denominations during this period; however, local youth work did of course continue. It was not until 1924, and more properly 1931, that the Baptist Young Peoples' Union (BYPU) of the Maritime Provinces was organized and actively functioning.<sup>10</sup> However, as a result of the Sunday School and YMCA/YWCA movements, co-operative youth efforts began in earnest during the First World War. The social gospel movement and the related temperance movements had highlighted the importance of citizenship training, moral development, and character-building for young people. The roles of women's missionary societies of various stripes and the International Sunday School Association in these developments cannot be understated.<sup>11</sup> Programs such as Canadian Girls In Training (CGIT) and Trail Rangers sprung into existence based on a fourfold ideal of life as

expressed in Luke 2:52,<sup>12</sup> under the supervision of provincial and inter-denominational committees for boys' and girls' work.

By 1919, these Christian education committees fell under the jurisdiction of the newly formed Maritime Religious Education Council (MREC).<sup>13</sup> Maritime Baptists played a key role in the formation of the MREC along with the constituent bodies of what would become the United Church of Canada.<sup>14</sup> The MREC would become a major player in the effort of Protestant churches to provide youth education and training for the next forty years.<sup>15</sup> Surprisingly, little work has been done on studying the impact and organizational history of these inter-denominational enterprises.<sup>16</sup> Besides CGIT and ranger groups, the MREC would help coordinate the development of Boys' Conferences like the one that took place in Digby in 1935 and of Boys' Parliaments.

The *Tattler* is littered with evidence of these co-operative youth efforts. For instance, we learn that the Willing Workers CGIT of Sandy Cove, Digby County, "entertained" a teenage Sunday School boys class in February of 1936.<sup>17</sup> Central Grove had an active CGIT program in 1938. Shortliffe, in a *Tattler* editorial on 9 May 1936, laments the resignation of the much liked Rev. I.J. Levy as the boys' field secretary of the MREC as it would mean that no boys' conference would be held for the year. Along with the youth of Sandy Cove, he urged the idea of holding a local conference under the leadership of Islands and Digby Neck pastors. It seems that local conferences had been held for the past three years under the auspices of the MREC and had been "outstanding successes." The Sandy Cove CGIT group appointed Clara Gidney and Edwina McClough to attend the Bridgetown CGIT conference on 8-10 May 1936. In 25 January 1940, readers of the *Tattler* learned of plans to publish an interdenominational young peoples' paper for Digby youth organizations under the chairmanship of Robert McCleave.<sup>18</sup>

These efforts by people of various backgrounds did not survive in Maritime Canada after the 1970s; however, they did leave a significant legacy of co-operation, the building of various children's summer camps, and the publication of Canadian-based Sunday School and youth group study materials.<sup>19</sup> In a smaller way, co-operative efforts also served to encourage local groups of many denominations. For instance, according to the *Tattler*, the Baptist Young Peoples' Unions at Freeport<sup>20</sup> and Centreville often took part in inter-church events. The young peoples' group in Tiverton was a combined United Baptist and Church of Christ

(Disciples) group that was active in the 1930s through to the 1980s. Much of this local spirit pervades in some locals to this day. Ministers and churches at least in the Digby-Annapolis area seemed very committed to united efforts, and the young people appeared eager to share in new experiences and to meet new friends.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Youth Involvement in Church Activities***

While convention-wide youth work was largely dormant between 1907 and 1930, I have suggested that inter-denominational efforts helped fill the gap. However, in 1931, the Baptist Young Peoples' Union of the Maritime Provinces was re-organized and re-energized. Yearly conferences and young peoples' papers were produced, such as *The Challenger*. While no mention is made in the existing editions of the *Tattler* concerning Maritime-wide Baptist youth conferences, the editors in Central Grove would have certainly been familiar with *The Challenger*<sup>22</sup> and other denominational materials. The BYPUs and other young peoples' groups were certainly central youth institutions on the Islands and in surrounding communities. Indeed, there is rarely an issue of the *Tattler* that does not record the activities a church youth group in one of the villages.

What were youth looking at these church-based institutions to provide? Why were young people interested in becoming involved in their activities? The pages of the *Tattler* provide some clues. One of the most obvious reasons appears to be associated with the need to develop friendships and to participate in social entertainment. Church youth groups were principally active during the winter or school months,<sup>23</sup> and they provided on-going programs for biblical study and something to do. For instance, on 19 December 1936, the Central Grove BYPU held a social evening at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Tibert. "Delicious refreshments were served," and "progressive crokinole was the main feature of the evening." On 17 April 1938, the CGIT of Central Grove helped hold an Easter program in the church. Readings, carols, a solo, and Santa were the fare (besides the gifts and candies) for a meeting of the Bear River BYPU in December of 1939.<sup>24</sup> In February of 1940, the same group held a Valentine Social in the vestry with the United YPS as their guests.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, pastors were often involved in youth activities of a larger scope that developed in concert with young peoples' groups and inter-denominational or community-sponsored events, including baseball

leagues and sewing circles. Here is a supporting reference from a *Tattler* of 1938:

A visitor at Freeport this week and one you all remember is Rev. A.W. Akerley of Hillsborough, NB, former pastor of the Freeport Baptist church, and a great favourite with the younger set there. Do you remember those hot Saturday afternoons a few years back when his voice down shortstop way kept the Freeport ball team jumping? You do! And could he sock that old "apple" – You're telling me!<sup>26</sup>

Baseball was an important recreation that brought many islanders together. As an example, in 1935, Freeport downed the Yarmouth "Hawks" with a score of 5-4 on 20 July, although Bridgetown beat Freeport 2-0 in a game a week later.<sup>27</sup>

Other reasons for joining youth groups included the opportunities for Bible study and the chance to assist others in Christian service. The *Tattler* editors were very concerned about learning Biblical principles and teachings; this must not be underestimated. As a matter of fact, during the publication years of 1935 and 1936, various Baptist ministers from, or formerly from, the local area were invited to share their thoughts with readers through "The Quiet Hour" column.<sup>28</sup> Knowing Christ was important to Rupert and Ivan. In the 27 April 1935, editorial of the *Tattler*, "boys" [aged 14 and older] were urged to attend the "coming Boys Conference . . . in Sandy Cove." As the editorial states, your "church can derive benefit from these discussions, BUT ONLY IF YOU ARE REPRESENTED." The conference was organized to give opportunities for "worship, discussion of vital problems, addresses and happy fellowship." A November 1933 article outlined Rupert's belief that many times "we pray for Opportunity that in some small way we may help to enlarge the Kingdom of God," yet when chances come along "we are as the coward in battle" and we disappoint God.<sup>29</sup>

A real concern for the plight of others is also revealed on the small papers' pages. This desire to serve may have contributed to youth having an interest in church groups and co-operative activities. The Island press could never be accused of backing down on issues, and youth groups and conventions provided important places for discussion for Ivan and Rupert. Key elements to the success of the 1935 Boys' Conference in Digby were two of the questions that small groups were asked to discuss: what were

the three most serious problems confronting the world and what were some possible solutions.<sup>30</sup> The paper speaks out against inappropriate attitudes, strives to give equal press to people regardless of their position in the community, advocates good morality, and empathizes with those in difficulty. The fishermen's strike of 1938 provides a good example. The prices for fish had fallen so low in October 1938 that the fishermen decided to strike and form a fishermen's union in order to force better company prices. Poverty was an issue of concern for both fishermen and plant works. On 7 December 1935, the paper reported that the lobster prices were very low – 17 cents per pound! Other issues were also important: youth employment and migration, liquor control, safe driving laws, adequate school education, ample ferry service, world peace & war, and even the safety of bridges and roads.<sup>31</sup> Two other issues will be dealt with separately later in this essay: illegal liquor selling and the peace/war theme. Some of the editors' treatment of issues may at first appear naive and idealistic; however, must remember that these young people were growing up, learning, and trying to be honest with their feelings and values.

Finally, there may have been other factors, as well. For example, parent and peer pressure might have played a role in some youth joining groups. Certainly, if one wanted to be active and part of the crowd during this period, youth groups were the places to be. Another issue was the desire of young people to develop into good, capable, and balanced leaders for the future society and church. The *Tattler* portrays this issue as central, at least to the editors' understandings of their task, and this topic will be dealt with as a separate concern below. In fact, all remaining issues in this essay deal with aspects of leadership either to the church, community, or both.

### ***Youth Leadership Development***

Early in the *Tattler's* pages, the need for the church to be active and supportive in providing leadership training opportunities to young people is raised. The editors also remind young people of their duties to God. It is not surprising then, when either group fails to perform as expected, the editors let them know. Readers of the *Tattler* saw an example of this on 21 April 1938. The Womens' Missionary Aid Society and the CGIT of Central Grove – adults and youth working together – presented an Easter

program. The event was successful, but the editors were very concerned about the lack of audience support that the show received: “Outside of those who participated in the program few local people were there. The audience was made up mostly of people from Tiverton and Westport. Where were the people of Central Grove?”

Why were they upset at this? It appears that the chief reason was that adults in the community normally complained about “the doings of young people, insinuating” that they were wasting their time and money attending dances and shows while the church was “pushed in the background.” However, when the young people did put effort into a church event, the complainers stayed home. The editors reminded readers that their presence was needed in order for special services to be successful and that adults were doing the same thing that the youth had been accused of in the past.

However, the adults of the church and community did not heed the editors’ advice. The issue came to a head again during the winter of 1939, following the visit of the Rev. A.A. MacLeod, the Field Secretary for the Nova Scotia Sons of Temperance. Rev. MacLeod wanted to re-organize a temperance division. The editors supported the move and assured Rev. MacLeod of it, but they noted that there had been serious problems with youth work and adult co-operation in the past. “It most certainly would be useless,” they wrote, “to re-organize the Central Grove Division unless the older people are willing to back up the young people in their efforts. We have had young people’s unions in recent years, but all of them failed to make the grade.” The editors went on to explain why they felt that youth work had not been successful in recent times:

There are a few always ready . . . and eager to find some flaw that can be exaggerated and made ridiculous . . . It almost appears that the older church people don’t want to see the young coming forward to take their places. There never existed a young person who could walk spotless before the world, and there never will be such a person. But let a person make a slip who holds any office in any Christian organization, and the books might as well be closed then and there.

Central Grove has had plenty of talent in the past – plenty of it. But where is the talent now? [It has been] Completely crushed by malicious gossip and complete lack of co-operation.

We offer no apologies for this editorial, for we believe it is time something was done . . . Young people cannot carry on alone without the assistance of people who have experience. It is impossible.

Let's get to work and do some "house cleaning" . . . [and] get together in Christian fellowship . . . [then] will be the time to re-organize [the] Division.<sup>32</sup>

This editorial sparked a significant amount of debate if the letter from a Freeport "Church Member" in the 30 November issue is accurate. The writer of the letter places the blame on both the young and the old; however, there was a strong message in it for the youth: the writer felt that too much emphasis was placed on dances and picture shows. Here is a part of the letter:

I hold nothing against the pictures. I believe that most of the motion pictures are highly educational and could be an asset to the young folk's welfare, but I do think that it is wrong to take the last cent to see the show Saturday night, and have nothing to put on the plate Sunday . . . Boys and girls are different today. To the most of them nothing is sacred, and they take little interest in anything pertaining to the church.

I do agree with you when you say it's time young and old got together in true Christian fellowship.

Attitudes do not appear to have changed very much in 60 years for adults or youth. They all see themselves as different.

Two weeks later on 14 December 1939, the situation worsened. In large print, the editorial headline read, "STRIKES BLOW AT YOUNG: Rev. J. G. Wakeling calls Freeport Young People 'Hoodlums'." The editors admitted that many a negative letter concerning the church and pastor had arrived at the *Tattler* office over the years, but the editors always promptly consigned them "to the waste paper basket." They assured readers that Rev. Wakeling was a "fine man, capable of accomplishing much good." but his comments the previous Sunday night could not be overlooked. The minister had accused boys invited to a CGIT gathering of misbehaving and some "imported specimens" of the same thing. The "imported" guests were both editors of the *Tattler*, and they denied that anyone had misbehaved. They went on to charge:

Perhaps if Mr. Wakeling had attended the party he would have left such a remark unsaid . . .

Had Mr. Wakeling been a worker with the young people: if he had

spared no effort to bring them together under Christian leadership, then his stand could be justified. Provide something for the young people; give them something to do and they MUST be guided.

Miss Nichols is putting up a gallant fight to keep the young girls together in the CGIT group. She deserves encouragement and help in this splendid work.

*It is any minister's place to mix with both young and old, find out for himself what's going on and NOT BE MISLED BY MALICIOUS GOSSIP.*

Rev. Wakeling was admonished to "Think it over."

While reactionary and personal in nature, this was "spunky" writing. The *Tattler* was attempting to live up to its motto of "Without Fear or Favour." It is difficult to know what the outcome of this situation was; however, it is important to note that the *Tattler* was circulated to over 5000 homes locally and beyond. In this way, the editors exercised a degree of power. I do not know whether they exercised it properly here but, certainly, the crux of their plea was that the youth "must be given encouragement and help before it is too late." I can find no mention of the issue in the newspapers following this time. Hopefully, the incident resulted in stronger youth programs and co-operation than before.

### *Temperance*

One issue that the *Tattler* showed incredible leadership on even in the face of threats was on the impropriety of illegal liquor trading and bootlegging in the area. Prohibition had officially ended in Nova Scotia in 1930 as a result of a 1929 plebiscite. Liquor sales became legal only in government controlled stores,<sup>33</sup> and the profits of the Nova Scotia Liquor Control Commission were originally applied first of all to the costs of the newly established rural police.<sup>34</sup> Even with these changes, however, many areas remained dry and the temperance movement and spirit lingered in rural Nova Scotia. Organized youth programs talked about its vices.<sup>35</sup> The *Tattler* had reported that a cargo of rum had been brought on the Island in July of 1936, and the police had done nothing. In many Baptist churches in particular, drinking was not an acceptable behaviour for a member.<sup>36</sup> This attitude permeated the larger society. By 1937, the temperance movement appeared to be regaining some of its former popularity. For

instance, on Tuesday, 19 October of that year, a public temperance meeting was held at the Little River Baptist Church (Digby County) and the "Rising Tide" Division of the Sons of Temperance was re-organized with men, women, and youth participating. Similar revivals were attempted in other communities.

Following an article on 4 August 1938, in support of abstinence education for youth,<sup>37</sup> the *Tattler* ran an editorial on 29 September that stated that rum running on Long Island was in full swing and "must be stopped." "Let the Mounties come in plain clothes to some of our dances and *plenty* of arrests could be made. *Islanders are asking for ACTION.*" On the following week, the *Tattler's* headline read, "Stop Press, EXTRA, Editors' Lives are Threatened." Ivan and Rupert had received a threat of death if they published "one more word" about illegal liquor on the Island. In the 13 October issue, readers learned about the impending visit of the King and Queen to Canada later in the year and on the second page that two arrests had been made by the RCMP on charges of possessing illegal liquor. The editors urged the police to arrest the "promoters."

### ***Faces of War and Peace***

The final topic of imposing interest for the editors and youth of Central Grove (and by extension others) during this period was the issue of maintaining peace and avoiding war. Peace would have most certainly been discussed during youth meetings, especially around 11 November. The concern loomed larger as the 1930s drew near to a close. On Armistice Day 1937, Rupert Cann printed an editorial paying sad tribute to the over 60,000 graves and 170,000 disabilities of Canadians as a result of the Great War. The price had been huge, and the conflict had ended only nineteen years before. Placed side-by-side with a news item on the expected opening of Westport's new "Star" theatre, this editorial ended with an ominous prayer petitioning for the whole Dominion that "war will never sweep this old world, but that our young men shall be able to live for our country instead of dying on the altar of the world's stupidity and greed." In October, Rupert had also printed a poem in "The Quiet Hour" called "Song of Youth." In it, he expressed the following hope in the last two stanzas:

I want no touch of power that maims,

Nor glory that's won by hate  
No triumph of blood, in mad renown,  
No medals, nor vast estate.

I want to live for my own true land--  
To give of my best and then  
To know that a world of peace is won  
By the love of God and men.<sup>38</sup>

As readers can see, the issue of war cannot be easily separated from the idea of youth in the editors' minds; this is largely due to the fact that the front-line burden of war is placed on the shoulders of young people. The duty of grieving and holding the home fires together is that of the older people.

A year later, as the local situation on Long Island seemed to be falling apart amidst a fisherman's strike in Freeport and a threat of death to the editors for their ranting against booze, the editorial was not about the strike or the threat. Instead, the minds of the editors were on the close call with war that the world had nearly suffered. It is entitled "Peace" and is printed below in its entirety:

As the world toppled on the brink of another war, Great Britain [led it] back to peace. Since the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 1 November 1918, the world has never been so close to war. The outlook the first part of last week was everything but promising. But Britain "pulled the cords," and the world was saved – saved from the slaughtering of the youth of the land, the destruction of cities, terror, and the shedding of precious blood. Today the scene has changed to brightness and rejoicing. Today we have Peace: may it be enduring.

In hindsight, we know that this "Peace" was anything but enduring.

While the editorial policy of the *Tattler* did change following the declaration of war a year later, in 1939, the change to a pro-war policy, while never in doubt, was made with an air of reluctance and with the hope that peace would quickly prevail. On 14 January 1940, the following poem, probably written by Rupert Cann, was published in "The Quiet Hour":

**Lines of Peace**

Peace lies around me  
Like a garment,  
I gather it in and hold it  
As a vestment:  
Then cloaked in  
Thought transference  
I send it out into that part  
Of the world wherein  
War is raging or discontent  
Smoulders, hoping against hope  
That my thoughts  
Made into a universal prayer  
In His name,  
Will reach and soften  
The hardened hearts  
Of war lords who delight in war's game,  
Dear God, Omnipotent One,  
Answer my loving prayer,  
I beseech Thee!

It was in this war period that the notion of peace which the *Tattler* spoke about was forced to change from one aimed at cessation of conflict to one of God's transforming grace. In the above poem, we see the start of this altering perspective. In the interest of patriotism and maintenance of personal faith, the peace that Jesus came to give would become more important and in some senses more enduring and powerful. Reflective of this need to change is an opinion piece on the eve of the Dominion elections that while both the Liberals and Conservatives had promised no conscription, "Mr. King and Mr. Manion seem to forget that Canada must have men, thousands of them [and, that unless] peace comes in the near future, conscription of man-power in Canada will be necessary, and neither Dr. Manion or Mr. King will be able to prevent it."<sup>39</sup>

Finally, the Freeport BYPU would print two editions of a newspaper, called *The Freeport Gazette*. They would continue the tradition of two earlier Baptist youth in their aim to serve the needs of the local community and of young people in particular. The paper was printed by The Island Print (publishers of the *Tattler*) and was the same size; 500 copies were

printed of each issue. It was sent out to the over one hundred “Boys In Service” from the area (including one “girl”)<sup>40</sup> as a source of information and entertainment while they were away. It was also distributed in Freeport, as well. Acadia University Archives holds the only known copy of the second issue of this short-lived newspaper. It told of the two and a half month loss of power on the island in the winter of 1942/43 and of a comical black out in Tiverton that disrupted a Bible study. There was fishing news, a wedding report, church and Red Cross fundraising notes, and some discussion as to the “post-war” world. An interesting opinion piece on “The Freeport of 195-” was also included.<sup>41</sup>

### ***Some Concluding Words***

*The Tiny Tattler* ceased publication on Dominion Day, 1943, ten years and five months after it began as the innovative dream of Ivan Shortliffe and Rupert Cann during the Depression years. Rupert had handled the press since 1940 with the help of his sister, Winifred Cann, and others. Rupert had decided to volunteer for military service, and Ivan had accepted a job with *The Halifax Herald*.<sup>42</sup> The paper had wrestled with many important issues, events, and concerns over its publication decade. This essay has highlighted a few of the more important ones in relation to young people and church; these included such things as the existence of inter-denominational work and excitement about it during the period, the scope of church involvement by young people, the role of church and its agencies for leadership development, the spectre of temperance, and the desire of these young Christians for a peaceful world. Other issues could have also been outlined, including the important interest in boy-girl relationships,<sup>43</sup> the presence of national and international news, the enjoyment of entertainment and “famous person” articles, comments on scientific developments, the problem of petty crime in the 1930s, and the difficulties of fishermen in the latter part of the decade. However, these issues and many more must be left to future researchers.

The 1930s and 1940s were indeed promising times for inter-church work especially amongst youth. Young people were excited about it, at least Rupert and Ivan were. These larger movements also increased the awareness of teenagers to issues like the need for better leadership development, the need for Christians to act as God would want them to, the devastation caused by “social evils” like drinking alcohol, and an

excitement for united and peaceful co-operation. Perhaps, it is not surprising, then, that many of these issues would find space in the pages of “Canada’s Smallest Newspaper.”

The editors pushed hard to cause the community to support youth work in the church. They recognised the need for younger folks to experience leadership roles, to test out their abilities and talents, and to learn from the experiences of the more mature Christians. Alongside the shipping news and social columns, these editors even had the gumption to stand up to community leaders and remind them of their duty toward the young. They did the same to young people and others. Perhaps idealistically, but not without passion, they turned the power of their paper against illegal liquor and exposed its presence in their community; they did this even in the face of death threats. They also dared to hope for peace in an imperfect world, to pray for it in 1940 when there seemed like no other situation would prevail.

The editors of the *Tattler*, *The Freeport Gazette*, and others like them<sup>44</sup> leave us a rich legacy of Baptist young people seeking to serve their communities, country, and God in an active and determined way. This social history is important, as are similar stories of the thoughts of youth of other denominations in other areas, and they all deserve more study. Ivan Shortliffe and Rupert Cann defied the circumstances of the Depression and pulled themselves above it. As their masthead often read,

*Who can tell what good may spring,  
From such a tiny, little thing.*

### ***Endnotes***

1. *The Tiny Tattler* is available on microfilm from the Public Archives of Nova Scotia (hereafter PANS); the film contains most issues. Copies may also be viewed at the museum of the Islands’ Historical Society, Tiverton, Digby County, NS. Smaller paper collections can be found at PANS and at Acadia University Archives. I extend special thanks to my professors, David Frank and Robert S. Wilson, for their encouragement with this task. I wish to thank the Islands’ Historical Society; Mr. and Mrs. William Brown of New Harbor, Maine, and my grandparents, Chester and Rosena Outhouse, for allowing me to make use of their numerous copies of *The Tiny Tattler* over the years. The staff of Acadia University’s Archives were also extremely patient and helpful

in making Baptist Collection materials available at my convenience. They all deserve my sincere thanks.

2. *The Digby Courier* continues to be the principal weekly newspaper of Digby County.
3. United Baptist Churches were located in Tiverton, Central Grove, Freeport, and Westport. Westport maintained its own pastorate. While Tiverton had at various times supported its own Baptist minister, the Depression conditions meant that Tiverton and Freeport co-operated in supporting a pastorate. Central Grove had always been a part of the Freeport field. The remaining two congregations on the Islands were associated with the Disciples of Christ: the Tiverton Christian Church and the Westport Church of Christ. A few families in Westport continued to worship on an infrequent United Church of Canada circuit, and a small number of people on Long Island considered themselves members of the Anglican, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventist, or Roman Catholic churches even though no congregations continued to exist. In fact, there had never been a Catholic building in the communities, but some residents of Acadian descent had met in homes on occasion (see Walter R. Greenwood, *The History of Freeport* [Yarmouth: The Davis Print, 1938], 28-29, 39).
4. See Shortliffe's final editorial in the *Tattler*, 1 July 1943. The second issue of the *Tattler* in August 1933, contained the following prayer: "Our Heavenly Father, / we thank Thee for all Thou has given us to enjoy / Bless this page and may it do much for Thee. / In the name of Jesus. / Amen."
5. The *Tattler* eventually printed social news and events for places as far from the Islands and Digby Neck areas as Digby and Smith's Cove in Digby County, Port Maitland in Yarmouth County, Maitland Bridge in Annapolis County, and Kempt and Caledonia in Queens County. It also printed national and international news, especially in later years. This paper served an important local readership; however, it was a novelty item and travelled across the continent through the hands of Island residents and around the world. *The Tiny Tattler* was even featured on a pre-movie entertainment reel of the Associated Screen News in 1938 that was circulated across Canada and as far away as the Philippines (see September 1938 issues of the *Tattler* for more information).
6. See William H. Kesterson, *The History of Journalism in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967).
7. As quoted in the *Tattler*, 20 January 1938, 5.

8. J. Lloyd Jess acted as the clerk of the Senior Boys' (Maritime Tuxis) Parliament for a number of years. He was a student at Acadia and graduated with a Master of Theology degree from Union Theological Seminary, New York, in 1937 (see *The Upward Trail* [ed. J. Arthur Covey] 9, No. 3 [September 1937], 6). *The Upward Trail* was a quarterly newsletter published by the Maritime Tuxis Parliament under the direction of the Maritime Religious Education Council (MREC).
9. *Tattler*, 9 November 1935, 1 and 16.
10. Rev. Alexander Gibson, United Baptist Convention Secretary, gave a major push to the revival of the BYPU Convention in 1931. Ninety youth had attended the regular convention in 1930, and they discussed plans at that time for the young peoples' convention the following year (George Edward Levy, *The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces* [Saint John: Barnes-Hopkins, Limited, 1946], 308).
11. William Clayton Bower and Percy Roy Hayward, *Protestantism Faces Its Educational Task Together* (Appleton, Wisconsin: C.C. Nelson Publishing Company, 1949), 112-115.
12. "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52, RSV). A more modern translation would use "humans" or "people" instead of "man."
13. The Maritime group was an auxiliary council of The Religious Education Council of Canada, formed in 1918. Through the Canadian council, the Maritimes were represented in the American-Canadian body called The International Council of Religious Education (Bower, *Protestantism Faces its Educational Task Together*, 27). The Canadian council and each denomination sent representatives to the International body. The Maritime Baptist representative was often the General Secretary of the United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces (see The International Council of Religious Education, *Yearbook 1946: Reports, Minutes & Directory* [Chicago, June 1946], 251 and 286). In 1946, for instance, Rev. Robert Shaw of the Milton Christian Church served as President of the Maritime Religious Education Council and Rev. I. Judson Levy served as Chairman of the General Board. The national council eventually became the Department of Christian Education of the Canadian Council of Churches in 1947.
14. Representatives of the Maritime Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists formed the greater majority of the council membership. The Anglicans and the Disciples of Christ would also be represented in the united work.

15. Catherine MacLean, President of the Maritime Young Peoples' Conference of The United Church of Canada, addressed a letter to Baptist youth on "What Others Are Doing" in *The Challenger*, February 1935, 4-5. This is further testament to the co-operative spirit of the period.
16. Several histories and articles have been written on the work of the Canadian-Girls-In-Training (CGIT) during this century; however, I have been able to find little or nothing on the efforts of the boys' movement outside of some YMCA historical sketches. Margaret Prang has written an important article on the CGIT exploring its ideology ("The Girl God Would Have Me Be': The Canadian Girls in Training, 1915-39," *Canadian Historical Review* LXVI, No. 2 (1985): 154-184.
17. Even though the programs of the MREC were divided by gender, the groups did encourage co-educational activities (see "Co-Operation with the Teen Age Boys' Department," in *The Leader's Book, CGIT* [Toronto: The National Girls' Work Board of The Religious Education Council of Canada, 1934], 94-95).
18. I have not been able to verify whether or not this initiative was acted upon from the sources available to me.
19. For example, a number of youth from Port Maitland, Yarmouth County, "spent an enjoyable evening, 18 July, at Greenwood Camp" "Port Maitland column," *Tattler*, 3 August 1935, 5.
20. The Freeport Baptist Young Peoples' Union was formed in the fall of 1893 (Robert Alder Colpitts, "The Maritime BYPU Through Fifty Years," B.Th. Thesis, Acadia University, 1943, Appendix I, 4).
21. The sense of the unity and co-operative spirit can be found in *The Freeport Gazette* (30 April 1943): "In Tiverton, we [the BYPU] share a ministry with the folk of the Christian Church. The people co-operate well as the minister[s] direct their services on alternate Sundays without any conflicts in appointment or any sense of rivalry. We quite realize that the ideas should be for the One Church but until that time comes when this can be brought about we are glad to work together in this spirit of harmony and mutual helpfulness (3)."
22. This magazine was printed for BYPUs by the Atlantic Baptist Convention for three years, 1934 to 1936 (Colpitts, "The Maritime BYPU: Through 50 Years," B.D. thesis, Acadia, 1945, 45).
23. "Plans are being made to start a BYPU for the winter months" by Rev. J. G. Wakeling in Central Grove (*Tattler*, 25 November 1937, 2). The BYPU appears to be in place for older youth.

24. *Tattler*, 21 December 1939, 8.
25. *Tattler*, 22 February 1940, 2.
26. *Tattler*, "A The Man About Town," 25 August 1938, 2.
27. *Tattler*, 3 August 1935, 2.
28. For instance, see "The Quiet Hour" feature entitled, "Appeal to Youth," by Rev. A. L. Huddleston, D.D. of Halifax, suggesting that young people let the "love of God guide us in our amusements." (*Tattler*, 4 January 1936, 9).
29. *Tattler*, November 1933 (monthly at this stage), 5.
30. *Tattler*, 9 November 1935, 16.
31. Note that the liquor "problem," unemployment, youth and war, and issues of peace were suggested as world problem issues for discussion by BYUP for 1934/35 (see Insert in *The Challenger*, ed. Margaret Hutchins (Saint John or Kentville: The Maritime Baptist Young Peoples' Convention, November 1934).
32. *Tattler*, 23 November 1939, 4.
33. Refer to the *Nova Scotia Liquor Control Act*, S.N.S. 1930, c. 2.
34. Nova Scotia, "Report of the Nova Scotia Liquor Commission," in *Journals of the House of Assembly* (Halifax, 1930), 5.
35. For instance, see the March and September Issues of *The Upward Trail*, a quarterly publication of the Maritime Taxis Parliament (under the auspices of the Maritime Religious Education Council).
36. See Levy, *The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces*, 261-264.
37. The *Tattler* had carried an article concerning on a meeting held at Immanuel Baptist Church in Truro, reporting on ways to fight the liquor store system. The speaker was Rev. A. A. MacLeod, Field Secretary of the Sons of Temperance (*Tattler*, 2 June 1938, 3).
38. *Tattler*, 7 October 1937, 3.
39. *Tattler*, 21 March 1940, 3.
40. A woman, Phyllis Crocker, served with the RCAF and was stationed in Prince Edward Island in 1943 (*The Freeport Gazette*, 30 April 1943, last page). Several thousand women served with the branches of the armed forces during the Second World War (see the web page of Veterans Affairs Canada,

[“http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/historical/secondwar/vrww2.htm”](http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/historical/secondwar/vrww2.htm)).

41. The predictions included in this fanciful letter of the future have proven surprisingly and uncannily true in most cases. Its Freeport writer, Keith Perry, must have been an avid observer. Perry was also present as a youth counsellor at the MREC’s Pinehurst Camp in Nova Scotia during the 1940s (see MREC, “Records of Pinehurst Camp”, Vol. 2, 1941-1951 in the Baptist Collection of Acadia University).
42. *The Freeport Gazette*, 30 April 1943, 5.
43. Beginning in 1939, a new question and answer column was unveiled, called “Aunt Judy.” Aunt Judy gave serious answers to questions sent to the paper for her response. Her identity was never revealed; however, I suspect that she was respected as much as “Dear Abby” is today (*Tattler*, 14 December 1940, 1). Many of her questions dealt with youthful relationships and difficulties.
44. For instance, the publishers of the *Tattler* also printed for differing periods, *The Tiny Telegram* for the Caledonia area of Queen’s County, and *The Bridgewater High School Globe* in Lunenburg County.

