

future.

What of the future? The best forecast that can be made is only an opinion. I am prepared to accept the opinion of the Committee as to the future. They have given us what was described, I believe in one of our documents at Ottawa, as an educated "guesstimate", and I believe today in the letter we have had from the Hon. Mr. King he describes it as an "informed guess." Whether it is an "educated guesstimate" or an "informed guess", it is as good as any statistician-economist can do for us at the present time. However, to go back to this "guesstimate". Let us look at what the businessmen think of the future, because that's the only way we in this country can gauge what the future is likely to be. If the businessmen of the country are willing to put money into their businesses, backing the future of the country, then we can be fairly safe in saying, "These men do not take chances with their money unless they have a fairly good idea of what they are doing."

Mr. Hickman There could be a philanthropic side to it.

Mr. Higgins Yes, Mr. Hickman, I agree you are a philanthropist in a big way. You are building that big service station in the west end, and that big garage in Corner Brook just because you are a philanthropist. Also in the fish industry there continues to be a lot of money and equipment put into it in the last two years. You realise there are today 18 modern plants in operation. Is that correct, Mr. Chairman? I am not quite sure if it is 18 or more modern fish plants.

Mr. Chairman Fourteen, Mr. Hollett says.

Mr. Higgins Compared with five in 1939 and two in 1934. Do you see the new herring plant being built by Connors Brothers at Petries, as well as a garage? Do you see that hard-headed businessman Mr. Crosbie blowing his money into the fishery for fun, into the herring and the whale fishery? How do you view these new fishery corporations that are being incorporated all over the place?

Then we go to the other of our main industries, mining. The Committee says that the future appears to be good. As far as we can gauge that is a fairly correct assumption. The present market for Bell Island ore is good, and if the apparent rapid depletion of the Spanish ores is correct, and assuming continuous large scale production by British industries, then we can look for a more

extensive market in the United Kingdom than before the war. Also you know Germany was one of our biggest customers before the war, and it is not outside the realm of possibility that she may not be a good customer again. The known deposit at Buchans is good, I believe, until at least 1956, and possibly more, but that is apparently the last word we have had. But as you know that mine was supposed to have been closed any time within the last ten or twelve years, closed permanently, and they have found new bodies of ore constantly. The operations at St. Lawrence have demonstrated that the area is one of the biggest fluorspar fields in the world. The Asbestos Corporation of Canada has recently been investing their money in our deposits here. All I intend to say with respect to the ore deposits of Labrador is that they may very well profoundly alter the whole economic position, as the Bell Island and Buchans mines have already done.

With respect to agriculture it is most heartening to know that the Director of Agriculture estimated our products this year are worth \$14-15 million. The Finance Committee, in my opinion, has been most conservative in estimating the value of the tourist industry. When on my holiday in Canada the past three months, I made a particular study of the tourist possibilities of the island, and I am quite convinced, as was my friend Mr. Smallwood as well, that the tourist possibilities of Newfoundland really have a wonderful future.

Mr. Smallwood Hear, hear!

Mr. Higgins As I said earlier, the Committee's "guesstimate" of the future appears to me to have a good background. I am prepared to accept the report as presented, and I submit that we are now in a sound, satisfactory financial position, and we have every reason to believe that we will continue to remain in that position in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Butt Mr. Chairman, there is one point in this report which I don't think Mr. Higgins quite stressed enough, one particular section of it. According to the Amulree Report in 1934 the gross public debt was \$101 million, and the gross public debt at March 31, 1947, was roughly \$83,993,000, but here's the solid fact that could have made a great deal of difference to us. The interest payment on our public debt in 1934, I believe, was \$5,200,000. It did not include any