

Report of the Transportation and Communications Committee¹

Mr. Chairman Orders of the day. Mr. Smallwood to table a report of the Transportation and Communications Committee.

Mr. Smallwood² Mr. Chairman, the members will find the copies of the report on their desks, and I believe that I am supposed only to give notice of the motion that the report be received tomorrow. However the day is still young, and I wonder, Mr. Chairman, if the gentlemen would be agreeable to the idea of proceeding this afternoon with the consideration of at least one section of the report, and whether they would be willing to waive the rule requiring notice of motion.... What I would like to do is to move the house into a committee of the whole to consider the report of the Committee on Transportation and Communications, on the understanding that only one section, namely that on Gander, be considered this afternoon.

[The Convention resolved into a committee of the whole]

Mr. Smallwood The report is a pretty bulky document of 143 foolscap pages, covering the railway, the coastal steamer system, posts and telegraphs, roads and bridges, Gander airport, broadcasting, and the tourist trade. The committee has worked hard, every member. Mr. MacDonald, Mr. Figary and Mr. Northcott were especially valuable members of the Committee in connection with its work in investigating the railway. Mr. Hannon was especially valuable in investigating posts and telegraphs, Mr. Butt and Mr. Ryan were able to give us a lot of information on roads and bridges, Mr. Bailey an endless fund of knowledge on shipping, and Mr. Watton, who acted as secretary, I hope will never have to work as hard again as in the last two weeks. We were very sorry to lose you, sir, from the Committee but very glad to see you so signally honoured by being appointed Chairman of the National Convention.

With your permission I propose for just a few minutes to review the report as a whole. We find that Gander cost \$4 million to build up to the outbreak of the war. In 1941 the Canadian government spent \$25 million, and the RAF spent \$3 million, so that the total cost of the

airport was \$32 million. Then Newfoundland bought out Canada's interest for \$1 million. Newfoundland, since then, has spent \$300,000 to reconvert the airport to civilian purposes, and will yet have to spend another \$300,000 to purchase new equipment.... We find in the report that Mr. Neill, Commissioner for Public Utilities, estimates the probable operating loss at around \$500,000 a year; while Squadron Leader Pattison estimates the probable operating loss at around \$1 million a year. Roads and bridges. We have in Newfoundland today 94 miles of paved highway, 1,500 miles of gravel highway. Secondary roads, 442 miles motorable, 154 miles non-motorable. Thus 2,000 miles motorable, 3,000 miles local, total, 5,000 miles. Of the 5,000 miles in the country now, 264 miles were built since Commission of Government came. That government has spent on new road construction \$2 million; on reconditioning \$1 million; on paving roads \$1.3 million; on bridge construction, \$1 million; on snow clearing \$132,000; and on road maintenance, \$4 million — total, \$11 million. Since they came they have spent \$781,000 on the purchase of road machinery and equipment, and they need now to spend a \$½ million on the purchase of new road machinery and equipment. We find that the government is spending \$2½ million a year under the heading of "Roads and Bridges." We find in our report that the future expenditure under the heading of roads may be \$1 million a year, and it should be \$2 million and probably \$2½ million

Under the heading of "Posts and Telegraphs" we find that in the last seven years there has been an average surplus of \$180,000 a year and from this it would appear that the Department of Posts and Telegraphs is self-supporting. We find this has been done at the cost of letting the system itself run down; and of underpaying the staff, especially the outport staff. I cannot at this point resist the temptation to quote from one of a number of letters that I have received from outport postmasters and operators. This one says:

For 25 years I have been one of those outport operators (we are everything now, postmasters, operators, bank managers, mes-

¹Volume II:75.

²Mr. Smallwood became convenor of the Transportation and Communications Committee in place of Mr. Bradley, when the latter became Chairman of the Convention.