

of our settlement in isolated places and our preoccupation with the fisheries, there came down through the years a feeling that agriculture, which in most countries formed the basis of a stable economy, should not be pushed so far as it could. These facts helped it to form an economy which has never in our history made for stability, and has given us almost without regard to economic conditions in the outside world a long series of recurrent depressions.

In a world in which industries were organised more or less on an individualistic basis, Newfoundlanders were able to extract a tolerable though relatively poor living. When in more recent times the emphasis in industry changed from individual to mass production, the instability of the Newfoundland economy showed up, as ours was then an economy out of keeping with world progress. In addition there were occasions when our own statesmen should have been able to alleviate conditions by reciprocity treaties with other countries, but there appeared always to be the interests of some power standing in the way. Witness the Bond-Blaine Treaty.¹

Carrying on this sketchy remembrance of past history we see weaknesses which may or may not have been caused by circumstances in our own handling of the situation: for example, a too great contribution to World War I on the financial side — not that Newfoundland should not have given her utmost, but that she had no right to give far beyond her capacity; and afterwards, a complete lack of disinterested self-interest in handling the burden of debt at a time of world crisis; and further an apparent unwillingness or inertia on the part of Newfoundlanders to accept full responsibility for thinking out our own problems and carrying them through. Arising out of this later weakness, and bringing ourselves down to the present day, we allowed ourselves to be put in a position where again we have found that the little margin between abject poverty and an ordinary decent standard of living has been jeopardised.

With these thoughts in mind I suggested yesterday the adjournment of the debate on the Fisheries interim report which was obviously designed to bring together a protest on behalf of

what, I believe, is a majority of Newfoundlanders against concessions given at Newfoundland's expense and over such a long period. Coming straight to the point of the proposal, I must say that I realise that in the end governmental and economic influence lies where power resides. In other words, if a small population in a small island happens to get in the way of larger and more powerful interests, inevitably — in the world as it has been constituted in the past — that island is dealt with as the powers decide. I am not concerned at the moment with whether binding contracts or legal technicalities may be used as an argument for a fatalistic attitude on our part. I am concerned with a new world which places emphasis on the welfare of small countries as well as great....

I suggest, therefore, that this problem of appealing to great powers on a humanitarian basis should be pushed to the limit of our ability. I would not have any of my listeners feel that I subscribe to a begging attitude. I suggest the problem be approached with dignity and on the basis that Newfoundlanders have something to offer which should command a reasonable return from fellow human beings — a position of strategic and geographical importance which should be as much shared by us as the position of wealth and purchasing power might be shared by other countries in the interests of all. It may be argued that Newfoundland has already been paid for concessions which have been given to other countries in the form of a prosperity which we never before enjoyed, but I would point out that the prosperity came not so much by design as by accident and our concern is not with the temporary present as with the continuing future.

You will note that the Fisheries Committee left their recommendations as it were in mid-air, in that they suggested that negotiations should be initiated at once: they did not say by whom. I appreciate the committee's difficulties in this respect because their only appeal could be to a government which committed this country to the bases deal without making reservations for a reconsideration of the position after the stress of war passed. And at our stage of political in-

¹A reciprocity treaty negotiated between Colonial Secretary Robert Bond and the American Secretary of State, James Blaine, in 1890. It would have allowed free access to the US market for Newfoundland products in exchange for allowing Americans to obtain bait in Newfoundland waters. As a result of Canadian protests, the treaty was not ratified.