

Labrador people would be quite justified in seeking to terminate their dependency upon us. If we're going to insist upon self-determination let's not draw the line at the Straits of Belle Isle. The people of Labrador too are surely entitled to a voice in the disposition of their own destiny....

There is some promise of significant expansion of our economy for the future. The increased output capacity planned for Corner Brook's paper mill will step up considerably the impact of our chief forest industry. But we might as well keep a tight reign on any great expectations with regard to our forests and our mines. The most we can ever hope to see come of their exploitation is that a few will do pretty well and a few more will manage to get along. But the number of Newfoundlanders who can ever hope to draw upon our forests and our mines for a full and steady livelihood is decidedly limited. Today, as ever, for such period of the future as is in any way foreseeable, the great mass of our people must depend upon fish and what can be made from its export. The gross national production of this island is compounded of much more than what comes of the export of fish. But the fishing industry is the only significant point of contact that most of our people have with the gross national income — the only point at which they get to share in it at all significantly; and if there is no future in fish, then we had better vacate this island, preferably by tomorrow sunrise.

The most significant development within the structure of our economy since the days of Cabot came during the war with the great diversion to frozen fish processing on a large scale. This was a more significant development even than the coming of the paper mills. It touched with a golden touch the lives of more people and released many man hours for productive work. We have had high hopes that this diversification within the structure of our chief industry would lead to greater stability of our economy, since it would mean that we would have one more basket into which to put our eggs. This year our frozen fish trade has received a set-back at the hands of our ancient enemy the foreign market, and we have been salting away our fish almost as frantically as at any time since the beginning. Yet there is the decided difference that, in all the years since the beginning, there is a greater measure of centralisation. Even if we have had to salt much

fish that would under different circumstances have been frozen, that salting has to a greater extent than previously been done at central stations, with fishermen thus being able to dispose of their catch green and our economy has been at the advantage of the extra man hours released for productive work.

In the intensive development of our fresh frozen fish industry lies our greatest hope for the future. With regard to salt cod, I don't think that we have any longer any grounds to hope for a more spacious destiny there. In a little while, perhaps the time is even now, world production of salt cod is going to be in excess of a world demand which those best qualified to judge admit cannot be increased. I grant you that we shall always be able to sell some salt cod provided we are prepared to sell at a low enough price. In any case, as I survey the totality of our economy, in the light of all that I have learned at this Convention, I can see only in the intensive development of our fresh frozen fish structure any way of coming by those three square meals a day, and a decent suit of clothes on the back, and a tight roof over the head, that I have been looking for my last forgotten fishermen on the bill of Cape St. George — and the last forgotten fishermen on all the bills of all the capes of this island.

Will the condition of the world markets in the years to come admit our proceeding with such intense development? Your guess is as good as mine. Our local fish processors are full of high hopes and most anxious to make the effort. But in the last analysis, the things that matter in fish are out of their hands. The shape of things to come in fish is the most uncertain thing in a world loaded with uncertainties. At this moment we must remain in the dark about our destiny because we must remain in the dark about fish. It has ever been thus, and there are no indications it is going to be any different for a long time to come. That means the historic vulnerability of our economy will project into the future.

Another important respect in which our economy has retained its essential character, is in its mercurial reaction to the least change that takes place in the markets of the world. Twice in this year we have had reminders of how much our economy is at the mercy of factors utterly beyond our control. In the early part of the year the United States terminated meat rationing, and in conse-