

and his associates desire to say, "We do not want to come before you publicly" — Why?

Mr. Hickman Mr. Chairman, has Mr. Wild made it clear that he will only come and address us, or will he answer questions? The motion is that the commissioner be asked to come and address us on the financial questions. Will he retire at the end of his address, or remain to be questioned?

Mr. Chairman I take it that perhaps an informal discussion might ensue.

Mr. Hickman Is Mr. Wild prepared to stay for that or not?

Mr. Chairman I presume so.

Mr. Smallwood On that point, which came up in the Committee on Rules and Procedure, my understanding is that the general principle is that all information that they produce to the Convention meeting in the committee of the whole of a public character is public information, to be passed on by the Convention to the press and the public, with exceptions. There might be occasions, we do not know what they might be, when it was definitely not in the best interests to give information on certain subjects. But, given these exceptions, all information which commissioners or public servants deliver to the Convention becomes instantly public property. That is my understanding of the matter. I was one of these who insisted on these principles. Major Cashin was another....

Mr. Crosbie I would like to say that with regard to meeting with the public, I don't think there should be any exceptions. We are here to get facts and information, and quite often during the last ten years we have heard, "It is not in the public interest." I think it is time we heard the end of it.

Mr. Smallwood I notice in Mr. Gushue's speech at Rotary¹ a few days ago he referred to a report which he said was secret, and not yet released to the public. If that has a bearing on the fisheries or any other resources or activities of this country, and if it would enable us to determine the economic state and prospects of Newfoundland, we ought to have it. But if it is the case that due to negotiations with governments and fishery organisations in other countries, it is not expedient to release it to the public, are we to be denied access to that document? Are we going to

put ourselves in the position of not being able to get information which we need because we have said we will not take any information unless it becomes public property? Let us assume that the government is negotiating with some other country on a question of tariff, or any matter. No government, speaking generally, will reveal a situation still in process of negotiation, and yet these negotiations could be dragged on for months. They might be prepared to give us that information if we did not immediately hand it over to the public. If the principle is established that we are to be the judges, on condition that it does not become public property immediately, then where are our rights? Denied? And is the public interest attacked? I am as keen as Mr. Crosbie and Major Cashin that the information coming before this Convention should come before the Newfoundland public. I feel so deeply on it that I have come to this conclusion, that if things are right and the public of Newfoundland gets everything that we get, then before we make our report to the public, it, having the same evidence will have come to the same conclusions, and made up its mind for itself. That can be done only if the Newfoundland people get the information that we get. In spite of that there may be occasions when that principle might have to be waived in the interests of getting information.

Mr. Chairman Take the case of negotiations. Of necessity the views of the negotiating party on the other side might have to be considered. Take some public promotion planning the utilisation of public resources, in which the government of the day is negotiating with some outside concern to develop these resources. I can imagine a situation where the promoter on the other side says, "No, I want these discussions secret and confidential between you and me until such time as the contract is consummated or concluded". We have to take into consideration not only the views but the directives on the other side, for instance the question of tariffs between the US and the Newfoundland governments. The Newfoundland government might be willing indeed to take the public into its confidence, but the US government may say, "No, we are negotiating as between government and government, and for the immediate present we will not allow the informa-

¹R. Gushue, speech at St. John's Rotary Club, 12 September 1946, as reported in *Evening Telegram*, 13 September 1946, p. 2.