

colony. We cannot base our argument on the importance of the British Empire to the maintenance of democracy when we calmly allow the light to go out in Newfoundland.<sup>1</sup>

These words, written in 1940 of the events of 1933-34, are full of portent today, as a more huge and menacing figure of totalitarianism advances on the strongholds of freedom everywhere.

But getting back to my case history Mr. Chairman. I studied the story of Newfoundland, and I drew my own conclusions. So much so that in 1943, when I made my first public address — a toast to Newfoundland — the sum and substance of my belief was contained in one sentence; that as far as I was concerned, “the miracle of Newfoundland was not that so little had been done here, but so much.” The Amulree Report, with its condemnation of our public men, became the textbook of all those whose intention, deliberate or otherwise, was to damn with faint praise all responsible governments of Newfoundland because it was the fashion. I think the attitudes of many Newfoundlanders to our former public men, especially those who should have known better, can be best summed up in a portion of the Gospel according to St. John: “They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth a service to God.” And my own attitude on the radio, six times a week as Mr. Smallwood did before me, is contained in the two verses that immediately precede that portion I have quoted: “He shall give testimony of me; and you shall give testimony, because you are with me from the beginning. These things I have spoken to you, that you may not be scandalised.”

No, Mr. Chairman, there was no excuse for the suspension of responsible government in this country. No method of cure could be as drastic as that for whatever ills beset us. They cut the legs from under us and still expected us to walk and to advance. If one could strain a point and find an excuse for the suspension of responsible government it might lie perhaps in the words of Commissioner Lodge, just quoted: “To have assumed responsibility for the good government of Newfoundland out of altruistic motives and to have achieved economic rehabilitation might have cost the British taxpayer a few millions. It would,

however, have added to the prestige of the British Empire.” But that did not happen.

What did happen? From 1934 to 1940 this country, this people, suffered privation the like of which was never known in her history. I was a civil servant from 1937 to 1941, in the Department of Public Health and Welfare. Every day there passed through my hands, as through the hands of many others, the harrowing story of the misery, distress, sickness and death; the Gethsemane, as someone already has said in here, of an entire people. I say there was a reason, too, for that — the absence of our traditional democratic institutions. Do you expect me to believe, that had Newfoundland retained the parliamentary system of responsible government that this country would have had to wallow in squalor and despair until a war brought unheard-of wealth to the island? Do you really believe that Newfoundlanders elected by their fellow-Newfoundlanders would sit indifferent to the cries and demands of the electorate? Do you think they would give away parts of our territory for 99 years, without seeking and demanding something in return? But there is no need to go on, you know the answer as well as I do.

I fully agree with Mr. Smallwood, that Commission of Government is not a right or permanent form of government for the people of this country; but I cannot agree that responsible government is so full of the doom and disaster that he now so ardently declares it will be for Newfoundland. In 1934 Mr. Smallwood was older than I am now, and the *Who's Who* of Newfoundland declares with respect to Mr. Smallwood, that he was an ardent supporter of the commission form of government in the first few years of its career. Thereafter he realised his error and became one of its stoutest opponents, and as has been pointed out, up to a few years ago, was the most redoubtable protagonist and booster of the return of Newfoundland to responsible government. I honestly believe that Mr. Smallwood in that role did more than most people to create the vague stirrings for national independence which in recent years developed to a strong demand in many sections of the island. Surely, it seems fair to ask, why wasn't union with another country suggested then either by Mr.

<sup>1</sup>Harold A. Innis, *The Cod Fisheries: The History of An International Economy* (Toronto, 1940), pp. xiii-xiv. The Lodge quotation is from Thomas Lodge, *Dictatorship in Newfoundland* (London, 1939), p. 265.