

Mr. Smallwood Mr. Chairman, I was saying, when the House rose for a short recess, that that fisherman in Fair Island, Bonavista Bay would not appreciate at all this rosy and optimistic picture of Newfoundland. Nor would the fisherman in Plate Cove West who says in his letter to me, "The people here never saw worse times in the worst years of the depression than they are now. They are starving slow but sure." And so I could quote letters from many parts of Bonavista Bay and from many other bays and many other coasts. And if you were to tell the fishermen on the north side of Bonavista Bay, and more especially those skipper men, who are amongst the finest breed that this country ever produced, who are finding it necessary now to sell their schooners and gear to get enough money to live on after three years of failure of the Labrador fishery, if you were to tell them that they have nothing to worry about, that the last 50 years were good years, and the next 50 years will be good, they would only laugh in your face, they would not believe it any more than I believe it. If you were to tell the fishermen who came back from the water and from Labrador this year, only to find that their fish was not worth a single, solitary dollar in cash, that it was only a receipt which could not name a price in many cases, that Newfoundland was on a firm foundation, these men too would refuse to believe you, and with every good reason.

Now I want to pass on to page 6 of the report. It tells us that the country should have a mercantile marine. Now I am not going to argue whether we should or should not, whether we should have our own local bottoms to do our own foreign trade. That is a big subject. It has been debated a good many times, but I want this House to be on its guard against taking the ipso-dipsy and unsupported and unproved word of the Economic Committee on this question. I remember an article by Mr. H.R. Brookes of the firm of Job Bros., a man who has had a great deal of experience with shipping, I remember a conversation here between Mr. Bailey and the Hon. R.B. Job on this very question. This is a very, very vexed question, not one on which we can speak glibly. And yet in comes the Finance Committee, bravely as though there were never any questions on it, as though there was only one side to it. It is obvious, according to them, that we should start a mercantile marine, and the government should defray,

should set aside public money to finance a mercantile marine...

Mr. Chairman Just one point if I may.... I think in fairness to the compilers of this report I should again remind you that opinion is merely a matter of judgement upon which men may reasonably differ, and I do not feel that in the expression of an opinion merely that the Committee, or the chairman of the Committee, should be placed in the position where they had to defend a mere question of opinion. If they were making it a statement of fact, yes. Then, of course, independent corroboration would be necessary to sustain a statement of fact as opposed to mere conjecture.

Mr. Cashin I made it as a statement of fact.

Mr. Chairman Well in that case Mr. Smallwood, will you please...

Mr. Smallwood Well, ... it is obviously a statement of opinion; if it were a statement of fact we would naturally call for evidence upon the statement so made; but as in fact it is a statement of opinion it is very much open to objection. Then any member of the House may state his opinion at variance with the Committee.

Mr. Cashin Quite.

Mr. Smallwood If it had been proposed by the Finance Committee around the year 1940 or 1941 that the government, out of the public revenues, should devote certain money to purchase or subsidise a local merchant marine there would have been a lot to be said for it, because the shipping business was on the upward trend and a lot of money was made out of shipping during the war. But now the war is over. How much longer can the Finance Committee guarantee this country or the government that it would be a safe investment to put public money behind the acquisition of a merchant marine? We know the state of the world, and what a hazardous thing it would be to risk public money in the acquisition of merchant ships, given the lack of knowledge of what is going to happen in the world.

Page 9 deals with Gander airport. I am not going to discuss Gander. I did that when we debated Gander, at the time that the Report on Transportation and Communications was debated. I think I may fairly say that I happened to be the one who drew the House's attention to the situation at Gander, and for that reason I am not going to go into the details today, but there