

Newfoundland

something which was their concern, and that if they decided they wished to become Canadians we would be glad to welcome them and to extend just as fair terms as we could hope to have ratified and confirmed by a Canadian parliament animated by the same sentiments. And it was in that spirit that the negotiations were carried on.

From what I have been able to read in the press since the agreement was signed, there appears to be almost complete unanimity on the part of the Canadian public that this was a good arrangement to make, and that it is a good thing in this year 1949 to complete the original project envisaged by the fathers of confederation in 1864. From what I have seen of the editorial comment in the newspapers of the island, there are still those who would prefer to have had responsible government re-established and the terms of confederation discussed by and through that responsible government. In the referendum the majority decided otherwise, however; and even among the objectors I think there are now large numbers who feel there has been a sincere attempt to make a fair proposal, and that confederation with Canada has been made inevitable both by the Almighty in the distribution of the lands and waters of this northern half of the North American continent, and by the historic development of the people who have inhabited these two parts. They are not strangers to each other. They come from the same stocks. They have developed under the same system of responsible government, of love of individual freedom, of respect for the human being as more important than the state. They have developed in the view that the state exists for the individual, and not the individual for the state. It is my hope that this arrangement will commend itself to the Canadian parliament, to the vast majority of the Canadian people and also to the vast majority of the people of Newfoundland. We are here now considering a matter of great moment. In the last two wars we realized how close we were to each other and how close we had to be in order to survive. In this troubled world I think we, both in Newfoundland and in Canada, feel that in this way our risks are more apt to be successfully met and any dangers overcome than was possible even with the non-constitutional union of spirits and hearts that united us during the last two wars. I earnestly hope it will be the view of this house that this union of Canada and Newfoundland is desirable in the interests of the people of these two lands, and as a lesson to the whole world of what can be accomplished by men of good will.

[Mr. St. Laurent.]

Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, following the remarks of the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) it is not my intention today to deal with the terms of the agreement in any detail, because the agreement will be under discussion when the bill is before the house. I shall simply discuss the resolution before us, which will have the effect of bringing before hon. members the bill the government intends to introduce. For this reason I shall defer any comments I might make about certain references made by the Prime Minister to some features of the agreement, which to me suggest that careful consideration should be given to its full effect.

Perhaps I might go so far as to suggest that, before the bill is formally introduced and the agreement accompanying it is placed before the house, the government give consideration to the desirability of removing the section in regard to oleomargarine, for reasons which have nothing to do with the use of oleomargarine itself. The Prime Minister said the completion of confederation is more important than the question whether or not Tom Jones in Newfoundland is to eat oleomargarine. The balance of importance unquestionably is in accordance with what the Prime Minister said; but there is a very important question that may be involved in the inclusion of that section, to which I think the government should give some attention before we are asked to discuss it.

It is true that the section to which I refer was included in the draft terms of agreement before the Supreme Court of Canada had reached its decision as to the constitutional authority of the Canadian parliament to deal with restrictions on the use of oleomargarine. The provision that the manufacture of oleomargarine should be continued in Newfoundland related to the fact that already it was being manufactured there.

I am not concerned with the circumstances which led to the inclusion of this provision. What I am concerned with is that a principle is put forward which, if accepted, might apply with equal force to other matters of trade and commerce, and with serious consequences. It suggests that it is an acceptable principle to create trade barriers between provinces of Canada. Serious consideration should be given by the government and by the house to the principle involved in the acceptance of this provision of the agreement, even though the Supreme Court of Canada by its decision may to some extent have made this discussion academic.

There is one other interesting provision in the agreement which should not be disregarded by some of those who have found