

*Newfoundland*

convey an impression of how close our natural friendship really is, and undoubtedly greatly increased support in both Newfoundland and Canada for this idea of union, which has been before us for so many years. These young men and women, the very finest of our youth, were our ambassadors in this great cause; and no nation ever had better ambassadors than we had. Their efforts on our behalf, whether or not intentionally carried out for that purpose, have had much to do with what we have under consideration today.

The spirit of unity and wholehearted co-operation between Newfoundlanders and Canadians, which was so apparent at the Canadian army, naval and air bases established in Newfoundland during the war, offers a happy augury of the spirit of understanding and good will which can be established between the peoples of these two dominions when we become part of one nation.

I have touched only briefly on the many reasons why Canadians will welcome Newfoundland into confederation, as was intended under the original provisions of the British North America Act. But it would be folly for us to disregard the criticism which has been directed to the methods which have been employed in bringing this about. It is not only in Newfoundland that very severe criticism has been directed against the way in which this has been done. Many Newfoundlanders who are in favour of confederation, and strongly in favour, have been insistent that legislative authority should be restored to the people of Newfoundland and that elected representatives of such a legislative body should negotiate any terms which are to bring Newfoundland within confederation. They contend that the commission of government, appointed by the government of the United Kingdom, has no right to negotiate such terms either directly or through appointed representatives.

Newfoundland is not a colony. Newfoundland was accorded the full status of a dominion in the Statute of Westminster. It is argued, and in many cases argued with much bitterness, that it is inconsistent with democratic practices that any group short of the representatives of a fully constituted legislative assembly should be empowered to decide the terms under which Newfoundland will join Canada.

How strong that criticism is outside of Newfoundland, as well as within its boundaries, is shown by a letter published recently in the *Manchester Guardian* from Mr. Thomas Lodge, who was one of the first members of the commission of government appointed in 1934. Denouncing in the most vigorous

terms the procedure followed, Mr. Lodge describes the whole transaction as an "unholy deal." And those are his words, not mine. The same attitude is reflected in the press and in many public statements in Newfoundland. There is also much public criticism of the procedure in Canada, so far as Newfoundland is concerned, and the method which has been followed.

When the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) met the Newfoundland delegation appointed to discuss the terms of union, he said to them, "One thing is sure, the objective itself is more important than the approach." It seems to me that the approach is very important. It is essential that the union of Newfoundland with Canada be something much more than a mere legal union. It is essential that the union be one which appeals now, and will appeal in the years ahead, to the people of Newfoundland and to the people of Canada as something which united them in spirit and in friendship even more than it did in statutory form.

We have no way of knowing what discussions took place between the government of Canada and the government of the United Kingdom or the appointed representatives of Newfoundland. We do know that there is widespread discontent and dissatisfaction, and that this will not contribute to the spirit of harmony and good will which should be the main consideration of all those who welcome Newfoundland as a part of Canada.

It must however be remembered that in the house we are called upon only to deal with the steps which Canada will take to bring about confederation. Except for any action by the Canadian government which has not been disclosed and is therefore not known to the members of the house, the procedure so far as Newfoundland is concerned is one which affects the people of Newfoundland in their direct relationship with the government of the United Kingdom. We may well regret that appropriate steps were not taken to assure that there would be no cause for any widespread feeling of bitterness or dissatisfaction, but it is not for us to tell the people of our sister dominion what course they should follow in their own dealings or in their dealings with the government of the United Kingdom.

I hope I shall be forgiven for indicating that I have some personal sentimental feelings toward the transaction we have under consideration. It happens that my father's mother was born in a fishing village in Newfoundland, and that as a young boy I was constantly impressed with the stories of the hardy life of those fine people who lived by