

to errors of the past in order to learn from them, and I most earnestly hope that in doing so we will all, myself included, be able to make our criticisms constructive and helpful, and that we will not waste our time merely in venting or airing grievances with destructive criticisms. We will all have to weigh very carefully the possible effect of our words before uttering them, especially in the heat of debate.

I believe that we have a great and glorious opportunity of showing not only to the people of Newfoundland who have elected us, but to the whole British Commonwealth, those of our neighbouring Dominion and the United States, upon all of whom we are so greatly dependent for our future welfare, that we are capable of discussing in a frank but dignified and friendly spirit the somewhat involved problems of our future status. Let us not forget, however, that true as it is that we are largely dependent upon others, and particularly upon the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, for our future welfare, it has been clearly demonstrated during the past strenuous six years that the many millions of people in these great countries are to a considerable extent dependent for their protection upon the territory of our island, our Labrador territory, and our resources. This fact alone should assure us of sympathetic interest from the people of all these countries in our endeavours to maintain a decent standard of living here, under as independent an administration as this Convention and our electors may eventually decide to be the best for our circumstances. These neighbours all have an interest in seeing a happy and contented people here, and will not forget that the Atlantic Charter was solemnly negotiated in Newfoundland waters. Do what we will, our future prosperity is dependent upon our economic relations, especially our customs tariffs with the mother country, Canada and the United States, and upon our co-operation with all three of these great nations. I regard this as the most important sentence in my address.

The wide scope of our duties is shown by the opening paragraph of our National Convention Act,¹ which reads as follows:

Whereas it has been decided that provision should be made for enabling the people of Newfoundland to examine the fu-

ture of the Island and express their considered views as to suitable forms of government for the Island, having regard to the financial and economic conditions prevailing therein, and that this provision could most appropriately be the holding of an elected National Convention of Newfoundlanders.

Some of us have come here with more or less fixed ideas as to our future form of government, but the majority of the delegates will agree that however rigid these ideas may be in some minds, it is our duty to be ready to modify or change them in accordance with the weight of evidence which will be produced as the result of our investigations and deliberations.

I feel sure that unless this National Convention is conducted (as I hope and believe it will be) in an open-minded way, and that unless we grasp this opportunity of showing to those who have elected us that we are capable of that "quiet calm deliberation which disentangles every knot", we will not be able to convince the electorate of this country, or of any other country, that we are qualified to revert in the immediate or even the distant future to the management of our own affairs. I think that most of us will probably agree that the goal at which every true Newfoundlander must eventually aim is self-government in some form or another, with or without restrictions, but whether the time for this has yet arrived, is a matter upon which no one should venture a definite opinion until there has been an exhaustive investigation into our current position.

I think that the electorate might justifiably reject any recommendations this Convention may make for self-government, or any other form of government, if we fail to discuss our future problems in a thoroughly searching manner. Unless we can furnish an intelligent, well-reasoned report, there would be very poor hope that these recommendations would be adopted upon submission to the electorate. An intelligent well reasoned report cannot be made without an exhaustive debate upon the pros and cons of any changes favoured, after first securing every particle of information we can gather to shed light upon our future economic position. There will no doubt be some expert advice offered to us. We should give such advice very careful consideration, but will have to use our own judgment as to

¹Volume II:1.