

to do what is necessary for its preservation.

(3) That they should be willing and able to fulfill the duties and discharge the functions which it imposes on them.

When, sir, people have not sufficient value and attachment to a representative constitution they have no chance whatever of retaining it. Representative institutions necessarily depend for permanence on the readiness of the people to fight for them in case they are in danger. When nobody, or only a small fraction, feels a degree of interest in the affairs of the country necessary to the formation of the public opinion, the electors will seldom make any use of the right of suffrage but to serve their own private interests or the interests of the locality, or by some one of them with whom they are connected as adherents or dependents. The smaller class who, in this state of public opinion, gain the command of the representative body, for the most part use it solely as a means of seeking their own fortunes. Representative government cannot permanently exist when you find such conditions.

I submit, Mr. Chairman, that is exactly what happened to Newfoundland in the years past. We were passive. We did not want to govern ourselves. We elected men and sent them to the House of Assembly and promptly forgot them for four years. And another crowd came along and said, "What about electing me?" And they elected them, to forget them again. You have to get people talking politics, and fighting over it if necessary, and until then we are not fit for responsible government or Commission government, or any other kind of government.

Can we, as a people in this Newfoundland that was ours, fulfil these fundamental conditions, or have we in order to advance in civilisation some lessons to learn, some habits not yet acquired, to the acquiring of which representative government is likely to be an impediment?

Now if we admit that a representative government responsible to the people is the best form of government, it would be wise to ask ourselves what actual functions shall be directly and personally discharged by the elected members. First and foremost, it is understood that the people have given to the elected body the control of everything for their common good. Now, there is a radical distinction between controlling the business of government and actually doing it. There

are many things which the elected body cannot do well of itself, but it ought to take the best means for having it well done by others. In the first place bodies ought not to administer, though they can deliberate. The popular assembly is also not fitted to dictate in detail to those who have charge of administration. Every branch of public administration is a skilled business.

Legislation too must be framed by minds trained to the task through long and labourious study. The job of the representative is not that of doing the work, but of causing it to be done, of determining to whom or to what sort of people it shall be confided, and giving or withholding the country's sanction to it when performed. The whole function then of an elected assembly is to watch and control the government; to throw the light of publicity on its acts (something like the Commission of Government, you know gentlemen!). Now we want a government and people prating like I am today, throwing the light of publicity on all the acts of government — not seven men sitting down at Government House or some other place, and making laws and publishing them without the people having the chance to know anything at all about them.

Representative assemblies are often charged with being places of mere talking. With regard to this Mill says, "I know not how a representative assembly can more usefully employ itself than in talk." When the subject of talk is the great public interest of the country, and every sentence of it represents the opinion either of some important body of persons in the country or of an individual in whom some such body have reposed their confidence. A place where every interest and shade of opinion in the country can have its cause even passionately pleaded in the face of the government and of all other interests and opinions, can compel them to listen, and either comply or state clearly why they do not, is in itself, if it answered no other purpose, one of the most important political institutions than can exist anywhere, and one of the foremost benefits of free government.

Such talk and free discussion coupled with skilled legislation and administration is of the essence of good government.

Mr. Chairman, I had considerable other things here, and I had to cut some of it out on account of the time. Now, what about us at this moment?