

Report of the Education Committee¹

Mr. Chairman Mr. Higgins to move that the report of the Committee on Education be further considered. I don't know what this means. Perhaps Mr. Higgins will be good enough to explain. **Mr. Higgins** The purpose of the motion is not to discuss the Report of the Education Committee in its entirety, but merely to direct your attention to part of it — that dealing with the Memorial University College. There is no reason why it can't be disposed of this afternoon.

Ever since the Convention opened, I have been approached by students and ex-students of the Memorial University College asking me to place before the Convention their wish that the status of the college be raised to that of a degree-conferring institution. I have not acceded to their request until the present time, because I wished to survey the position as carefully as possible, and to give some consideration to the grounds upon which such a claim is based.

I think one can take it for granted that there is an increasing demand for university education. The number of students at the Memorial University College this year is 432; of these, 181 are teachers in training; the remainder, 251 persons, is a body of students who can take the first two years of their university course there, and will then have to proceed elsewhere — if they can — to complete it. Many of you have read the numerous letters that have appeared in the daily papers from students who are bitterly disappointed that this September they must either terminate their university studies, or go to a Canadian or American university. Their appeal cannot remain unheeded. But I have come to the conclusion that the need for a university is not based upon the claims of these students alone, but on a deeper, fundamental need. This country needs a university. A university acts as a natural co-ordinating centre of education, and at the present time the need for this is a basic one. There is no body of Newfoundlanders more sincere in their work or devoted to their profession, than the educationalists and teachers of this country, and they themselves are acutely conscious that the establishing of a university would polarise our educational aims.

The heads of the different denominations — the Conference of the United Church and the

Anglican Synod — have in their ecclesiastical legislatures passed formal resolutions in favour of a national university. His Grace the Archbishop, in an address delivered on the occasion of the presentation of the first Judge Higgins Memorial Scholarships on February 27, 1945, spoke as follows:

I am glad to know that the expansion and development of the Memorial University College to the status of a full-fledged Newfoundland university is under the consideration of the educational authorities. This is a move that will commend itself to, and will have the approval of, all who have the best interests of the country at heart. But it would seem that there are one or two conditions indispensable to its success. In the first place it must be in personnel and equipment of such a standard that it will command the recognition of outside universities, and secondly it must be a Newfoundland university in the fullest sense of the word, with a Newfoundland atmosphere and background. To be a Newfoundland university its charter and constitutions should be such, after the model of many universities abroad, as to embrace within its scope and ambit those institutions in our midst which have their roots deep in the soil and the traditions of the country. Only in this way can it become a genuine Newfoundland institution, which will have the co-operation and support of all sections in the country. In order that the advantages and benefits of such a university be accessible to all, the establishment of scholarships would appear to be necessary both by the government and private philanthropy. We hope that as the years go on, and the new university develops to its full stature, many individual societies and other agencies amongst us will establish scholarships similar to those I have the privilege of presenting to these pupils today.

Various local organisations have passed similar resolutions. Now in view of the numerous petitions to the government, it is difficult to see why it is that this university has not already been established. I can hardly believe that it is on account of the cost involved. I am informed, that,

¹Volume II:65.