

former days engaged in wordy warfare to further the interest of their native country: men who played a noble part in the public affairs of Newfoundland, who served their day and generation with wisdom and devotion, men to whom the country is heavily indebted. We are meeting to welcome another body of men, who are the elected representatives of the different districts in Newfoundland as members of the National Convention: men confronted with a task as difficult, and shouldering a responsibility as heavy as any of their predecessors; men called upon to give of their best.

In the long and honoured history of Newfoundland there are many notable and outstanding dates, which her people can remember with pardonable and justifiable pride. Dates which, as it were, leap to the mind when one only thinks of Newfoundland — 1497, 1739, 1832, 1845 and many others. It is now over 217 years since the first governor of Newfoundland was appointed, 114 years since representative government was granted and 91 years since responsible government was first introduced. There are many memorable dates in the history of Newfoundland. Amongst those dates, in the days to come, will figure with no less lustre September 11, 1946. That date will not be omitted by the future historian of Newfoundland, since it is that on which the elected representatives of Newfoundland gathered together as a National Convention, presided over by a fellow countryman of theirs whose name has a deservedly honoured place in the counsels of the nation. These 46 Newfoundlanders gather together to consider, and here in the interest of accuracy I quote from the official terms of reference, "to consider and discuss amongst themselves as elected representatives of the Newfoundland people, the changes that have taken place in the financial and economic situation of the island since 1934, and bearing in mind the extent to which the high revenues of recent years have been due to war-time conditions, to examine the position of the country, and to make recommendations to His Majesty's Government as to possible forms of future government to be put before the people at a national referendum." Though these terms of reference do not permit of a roving commission, they do provide ample scope for the members of the Convention to ventilate their views on the

possible forms of future government.

To consider and discuss the financial and economic changes that have taken place in Newfoundland during the past 12 years is no small undertaking. To examine the position of the country calls for much thought and keen observation, and then in the light of all the knowledge gained and all the information placed before you, to make recommendations as to possible forms of future government. Such terms of reference will make it possible for every member of the Convention to do his duty by his people and the task of the Chairman should not be too onerous.

Nevertheless, it is true to state that at no time have a body of representatives in Newfoundland been called upon to deal with a more difficult task, nor to shoulder heavier responsibilities. To be entrusted with the obligation of recommending what forms of government are deserving of consideration by the people of any country is a great honour and a great responsibility. But to be entrusted with such a task in a crucial period of transition in the world's history, at a time of much uncertainty, adds distinction to the honour without in any way lessening the responsibility.

* Gentlemen, you are certainly entitled to use the words of Oliver Cromwell, words he wrote when in a most precarious and perilous position, surrounded by superior forces, "We are upon an engagement very difficult" — an engagement which will demand the highest and the best from every member of the Convention; which will demand not only intelligence and knowledge, but also wisdom and sagacity, tolerance and magnanimity; a task which will call for a high degree of selflessness, the noblest form of patriotism.

This in no way means there will not be differences of opinion; it in no way means that those differences will not be expressed with vigour and maybe passion. Persons who feel strongly, sometimes speak strongly. But what it does mean is that when a member does intervene, he will do so in the highest interest of the Convention and of the country.

Few questions have roused more feeling, have disturbed the emotions to a greater degree in nearly all countries, than questions relating to the possible forms of government. They raise not only political and constitutional issues but also issues of immense moral and social significance, questions to which the warm heart may be as safe