

have been commenting on the fact that, for the past few weeks, I have not been taking a very active part in the debates of this assembly. My explanation to them and to the public, is that, first, I felt the carefully prepared reports which the several committees have presented were in themselves sufficiently informative and factual for the basic purposes of this Convention. And second, wishing to expedite the work, I did not desire to enter into any analysis of endless details, which, if encouraged, could only develop into idle discussions, with a consequent cost of the people's money and the delegates' time. For these reasons, I have been content to adopt the role of a more or less silent spectator. But on the present occasion I rise to what I regard as a state of political emergency, with the object of placing before this Convention my impression of things as I see them today, and with the hope that what I shall have to say may be of some assistance to my fellow delegates and to the public at large.

On September 18 last, just a week after this Convention had assembled, I made a speech introducing the Chadwick-Jones report. I referred to this Convention in terms which, to some of you, may have seemed unduly harsh — perhaps shocking. I pointed out my lack of faith in this Convention, referred to it as being ethically improper, in view of the agreement which was made between the last Newfoundland parliament and the British government, wherein self-government was promised this country upon its becoming self-supporting. I pointed out how that agreement had been deliberately avoided and ignored by the wholly unauthorised substitution of this Convention set-up. I said that as time went on, and the true nature of this Convention emerged, many delegates would endorse my sentiments. I concluded with the statement that it would become clear that in its dealings with us, the Dominions Office had stolen the vocabulary of democracy, but had ignored both its spirit and substance.

Over four months have elapsed since I made that speech, and today the things that I said then seem to have proved too dismally true. In one respect, perhaps, I might change my views. At that time I referred to the Convention as a glorified stall. Today I do not regard it in any such light manner. Rather I see in its characteristics something far more sinister and even tragic.

Today I see it as a premeditated design to keep us out of control of our own country, so that time may be afforded those in power to complete their campaign of sabotage. And so, I see this Convention and its activities as something in the nature of fiddling while Rome burns. Now, let me say, that in speaking in this strain, I cast no reflection whatever on the personnel of this body. I simply speak of the Convention as a political entity — as being part of the costly and cumbersome machinery, consisting of plebiscites and referendums, which have been foisted on us to confuse our thoughts and efforts, until the plans of the Dominions Office have been completed.

As for the personnel in the months that we have been together, I have come to know most of the delegates intimately and have made many warm friends. I have been greatly impressed with the sound reasoning and sincere utterances shown in their speeches. Many of them may not have been blessed with college education, and have had to get their learning in the university of hard knocks, but new as some of them may be to the political atmosphere, they have proven that they can measure up to their jobs in a manner reflecting credit on themselves and the people they represent. We have in this assembly representatives of all Newfoundland, including Labrador. From the great forests of the west to the stormy coastlines of the north — merchants and miners, lawyers and lumbermen, fishermen and farmers, teachers and teamsters; the rich and the poor, the classes and the masses — all are represented here. And because of this wide representation, I feel that I am speaking, not so much to the delegates themselves, as to the 300,000 odd people who are depending on us to safeguard their interests. I speak on behalf of no particular district, nor as the advocate of any political party or belief, but just as an ordinary Newfoundlander to his fellow men and women, on a matter of national interest.

I said that I rose to an emergency, and perhaps I should explain myself a little more clearly. Let me say, then, that I am seriously alarmed, at the state of things in this country today. I am disturbed at the things which have come to my notice as an ordinary citizen and as a member of this Convention. I have seen things which I think the people should know, because in the final analysis they are our masters. They are the people