

make a deal....

Mr. HillierI supported wholeheartedly the resolution presented by my friend from Grand Falls, a man for whom I have every respect. I have no reason for doing otherwise, I have known him for a number of years and I know he is sincere in his remarks. One portion of that resolution which enabled me to support it whole-heartedly was "any other suitable form of government." I rise to support the resolution as presented by Mr. Smallwood, simply because I happen to know that the people of this country are looking for information in every particular and not in one particular. I am convinced that all the information we can get is not going to hurt anybody and unless we get the information from every source, how can we be expected to make a wise decision? Is it right we should deny the people of this country information which they are expecting to receive? It does not follow that because we receive that information we are going to accept it. I say in all sincerity let us not keep from the people what is their legal right.

Mr. Fowler It is most important that we be realistic concerning the whole matter. First I have to admit that there are a number of people who possibly favour the idea of federal union with Canada. There are also a number of people who may desire that we should continue under the protecting arm of the Dominions Office and hence retain the present dictatorial form of government, which according to the Letters Patent of 1934 should have been replaced as long ago as 1942 by responsible government.

With regard to responsible government we believe that there is a large number who still consider it the most suitable form of government for this country. It will be remembered that when the question of confederation with Canada became a live issue in 1895, we were in rather dire straits financially and economically and it might have been expected that the government of the day would have grasped at any straw floating down the stream of necessity. At that time however, Canada, thinking we were actually on the verge of financial demise, became so niggardly that the terms offered were so disgusting to our government and our people that they would have nothing to do with her. At that time Canada was of the opinion that she possessed the 110,000

square miles of Labrador, later awarded to us in 1927, and she saw in this country nothing but a barren land, where a few thousand poor fishermen eked out a bare existence. What does she see today? She sees Labrador with its possibilities for great mineral wealth, and wherein she has a lease for an air base for 99 years, and in the building of which she has expended many millions of dollars. She sees a Newfoundland apparently economically sound with balanced budgets and surpluses, a country which last year bought her goods to the extent of \$40 million, which has one of the finest air bases in the world, and which must, of necessity, for 90-odd years to come, be in close and friendly relations with the great and powerful USA by reason of the bases which that country has here. As a consequence she looks toward us with envious eyes, especially in view of the fact that she herself is bound to the USA by their recent mutual defence pact. Is it not to be expected that she would be desirous of obtaining absolute control of this country and thereby cement more closely her economic ties with the USA?

I believe that Canada might be prepared to offer terms which may appear very attractive. It is my opinion that the people of this country owe it to future generations to consider well and carefully the whole issue at stake, before being carried away by the rosy picture which the agents of Canada are endeavouring to paint. We have only to look at the economic history of all the Canadian provinces except Ontario or Quebec to see that confederation will by no manner of means bring us that utopia which some people would have us believe.

I heartily agree with the opinion which has often been expressed in this Convention that confederation is of such importance that it can only be discussed by the duly elected governments of both countries. We have it on the authority of the present government and consequently on the authority of the Dominions Office, that we have no right to discuss fiscal, political or economic arrangements with the Dominion of Canada, as according to the report of the special committee appointed to interview the Commission of Government,¹ these are, "matters entirely for discussion between governments." Where is the point in our sending a delegation to Canada? I

¹Volume II:446.