

**Report of the Ottawa Delegation
Proposed Arrangements for the Entry of Newfoundland into Confederation
Committee of the Whole**

Mr. Higgins Will you give me the nod, sir?

Mr. Chairman You moved the adjournment, Mr. Higgins, so you have the floor.

Mr. Higgins Thank you, sir. Before adjournment on Friday, I had been elaborating at some length on the value of our strategical, geographical position, and its particular value to the two countries immediately adjoining us, the United States and Canada. I am going to go on from there.

I stated that Canada is as yet, politically, an immature country. It is only slowly realising its own individuality. It is not therefore to be expected that it would have as clear-cut a policy as has the United States. Until June, 1940 it was impossible to secure much attention to arguments urging that Canada should assume responsibility for Newfoundland; it was too remote for the average Canadian to know much about, and since it was part of the Empire, there was no need to worry about it. Canada's failure to take any part in the effort taken in 1933 to put this country on its feet springs in a large measure from this cause. So too, in the American bases deal. A nation conscious of itself and jealous for its future would have been ready to undertake the complete job in Newfoundland, rather than to have even the friendliest of neutrals do it, with political results still to be determined. Things were moving quickly in the summer of 1940, and there was a suggestion of panic about. But even so, the grant by Great Britain of what is virtually territorial sovereignty in an island adjacent to Canada, which was once close to entering the Canadian confederation, and which administers an important area of the continent (Labrador) that had been handed over to it by Canada's acquiescence in a decision of arbitration (1927) largely because it was all in the family, was a rather extraordinary proceeding. It was only to be defended because of the exigencies of the moment, and because it was felt at the time that the United States was also one of the family. The Canadian government has since attempted to recover the situation by the protocol it secured to the bases agreement of 1941. Paragraph 1 of this protocol is as follows: "It is recognised that the defence, and as such is a matter of special concern to the Canadian

Government".

I wish at this time to draw your attention to the answer received by Mr. Hollett to this question submitted on December 2. The question was as follows:

I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask His Excellency the Governor of Newfoundland to seek clarification from the Government of the United Kingdom for the benefit of this Convention on the following point: that is to say, that whereas under the Lease Bases Agreement 1941, it was stipulated that upon the resumption by Newfoundland of the constitutional status held by it prior to the 16th February, 1934, the contracting parties to said agreement would be the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Newfoundland.

Now, therefore, what would the position should Newfoundland enter into confederation with Canada?

Would the contracting parties under said agreement be the Government of the United States of America, and the provincial government of Newfoundland, or otherwise? And if otherwise, to inform this Convention as to the real position which will exist.

To which he received the following reply:

It is assumed that the question is based on the text of notes exchanged between Mr. Churchill and Mr. Winant at the time of the signature of the Leased Bases Agreement of 1941 (Cmd. 6259). It was then agreed between the United Kingdom and United States governments that "upon resumption by Newfoundland of the constitutional status held by it prior to February 16, 1934, the words 'the Government of the United Kingdom' wherever they occur in relation to a provision applicable to Newfoundland in the said agreement shall be taken to mean, so far as Newfoundland is concerned, the Government of Newfoundland, and the agreement shall then be construed accordingly". The wording of this note did not cover the position which would arise in the event of Newfoundland entering into confederation, but in