

safeguard ourselves against repetition of the evils we knew before: our own experience, and the experience of numerous other countries who have practised responsible government.

Mr. Chairman, while Mr. Higgins was speaking here a few days ago, Mr. Smallwood criticised his remarks as being taken from Mr. MacKay's book on Newfoundland, without giving Mr. MacKay credit for it. I now have to confess to Newfoundland that the words of this address are those of one of our prominent public men, which I copied and repeated today. They were uttered by Mr. Smallwood himself, and I merely repeat them, use them, and give my support to Mr. Higgins' motion.

**Mr. Chairman** The motion is before the Chair, gentlemen, and time is running out.

**Mr. Roberts** Mr. Chairman, in rising to speak to the motion before the Chair, I wish to say I will vote for the two forms of government, namely responsible and Commission, to be placed on the ballot paper. Briefly I will endeavour to give you my reasons for so doing, by showing the merits or demerits of each form.

Responsible government is the ideal for the people of any country to strive for. I wonder if Newfoundlanders are doing just that? I am sure they are not, otherwise there would not be so much talk of other forms of government, or, as we find all over the country, an indifference to any form. Probably there is a reason for all this confusion. It seems strange, does it not, when we see the peoples of many countries today, large and small — and the European countries especially, devastated by war, famine and disease, their natural resources — striving to the point of bloodshed to drive foreigners out so as to govern themselves; while we in Newfoundland with balanced budgets, a surplus, our resources barely scratched, seem afraid to govern ourselves, or too indifferent to bother what happens to us.

It must seem peculiar to the peoples of other countries, but it may not be so hard for us to understand the situation when we review our past political history, and think of what happened to us after almost a 100 years of responsible government. With all due respect to our politicians, some of whom were great men, there must have been too many amongst them who did not have the best interests of the country at heart, otherwise we would not have landed in the mess we

did.

When the country became self-supporting, and it might seem that we are today, England was to restore to us responsible government. She did not do so, and consequently the mother of parliaments has been called by some people everything but a lady. But after 14 years of Commission of Government, to whom is she to pass back the reins of power? To the people who relinquished it? Where are they today? You can almost count on the fingers of one hand the men of the government who are left, or who would care to take control. Well, it may not be nice to say, but nevertheless it is a fact that the people of this country would think long and hard before trusting their destiny into those hands again, although, as I say, there may be some good men amongst them. Well then, who next? Probably the Responsible Government League we have heard of, consisting of good influential citizens of this city, businessmen and lawyers. Proper men, one would think, to run the affairs of this country, but the argument against these, especially in the outports, is the age-old prejudice of merchant versus fisherman, St. John's versus the outports. Why should St. John's run the outports? Very narrow views, and I wish I could say they don't exist, but unfortunately they do.

If that is the case, someone would suggest the National Convention, a body of men elected from every district, a cross-section of many trades and professions. Surely these must be the men we have been wanting for years. But what do you hear from all parts of the country, from all classes of people? We have been termed wranglers, wasters of public time and monies, incapables etc., and people hold up their hands in horror at the thought of trusting the affairs of this country to our incapable hands. How often have I heard the expression, until I am ashamed to say that I am a member of the Convention (although we don't deserve it), "If these are the sort of men we are likely to get to govern us, God help the country in a very few years." So the thought has been continually in my mind — how, after 14 or 15 years, could England give us back responsible government? Who is to take it back? The question has never been answered by the people who advocate it.

Still, if we wish to govern ourselves, we must have Newfoundlanders, and we must find the