

Newfoundland

that time, done anything to rebuff or repulse the advances being made by the people of Newfoundland we would have seriously offended a large number of them, and possibly offended them to the point where the matter of union with Canada would have been shelved again. We felt we must be extremely careful to do nothing which would offend the susceptibilities of those who we hoped, as the fathers of confederation had hoped more than eighty years ago, would ultimately become our fellow citizens in this Canadian nation.

The hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker) has asked what the Canadian government has done to remove the objections. For the reasons I have stated, the Canadian government did nothing to remove those objections, leaving it to the people of Newfoundland to make their decision and deal with those who favoured and those who did not favour union with Canada.

The third question was, Have any representations in opposition been received by the Canadian government. I have answered that question, and as soon as the staff find it for me I will table the further document which was addressed to the prime ministers in conference at the London meeting.

The fourth question was, Has this government made any representations to the United Kingdom government as to the desirability of restoring responsible government. To that question I must answer that we did not. We felt that it was not our province to do so and that, in so far as the Canadian government was concerned, it should leave entirely to the government of the United Kingdom and the government of Newfoundland the taking of such steps on their side as they might see fit. We felt that the Canadian government would have its responsibilities to the Canadian parliament in the attitude it was taking for Canada in these issues, and that it should not assume any further or greater responsibility than that.

I hope that this statement of fact will satisfy most people that we endeavoured to maintain a correct attitude in the course of these negotiations. As I have seen in newspaper articles the statement that this suggestion of union was the result of a deep-laid conspiracy which had arisen out of the meeting of the Quebec conference in 1943, there is one assertion I wish to make. I do not think I need to do more than mention the date. Hon. members know what it was that brought together in Quebec, in 1943, Mr. Winston Churchill and Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt, and I do not need to deny that statement. But for the record I deny that any question whatsoever of the entry of Newfoundland into confederation or of the

union of Newfoundland with Canada was discussed at the Quebec conference of 1943. At that time the leaders of those democratic nations were endeavouring to devise ways and means by which to bring to an end the horrible war which was threatening the very existence of us all. That was the matter that was discussed at the Quebec conference of 1943.

Moreover, I emphatically deny that there was at any time any attempt by the Canadian government, otherwise than by maintaining a correct attitude and by maintaining the attitude that the whole of the people have maintained, to induce our Newfoundland friends to become associated with us. We felt then, as I still feel today, that the most effective way we could act to bring about, as early as possible, a consummation of this dream of 1867, was to behave as honourable, free men in a prosperous community, acting in a correct manner in the administration of their affairs. We felt that was the thing that would be most apt to make an impression upon the people of Newfoundland. That attitude was adopted and maintained with the most scrupulous exactitude. On the other hand, we felt that to do anything that might be construed as a rebuff to or a repulse of any advances that were being made would be offensive to that population; and we refrained from doing anything of that kind. I hope the people of Newfoundland and the people of Canada will find in the end that this union, on the terms that have been proposed, will work out to the mutual advantage of all those who will be citizens of greater Canada, and that it will prove to be a step forward in the progress of that people, which already occupies an important position in the family of nations.

Mr. Raymond (Beauharnois-Laprairie): Mr. Speaker, before I proceed with the observations I intend to offer to the house on this subject I should like to ask the Prime Minister a question. I should like to know whether the Statute of Westminster applies to Newfoundland.

Mr. St. Laurent: I should not like to be too positive about that. We are told by the Newfoundland delegation that it did not apply to Newfoundland inasmuch as it provided that it would come into force in any one of the dominions upon adoption by the parliament of that dominion, and the parliament or the then legislature of Newfoundland had not adopted it. But the terms of union provide that, if union is consummated, it will thereafter apply to the province of Newfoundland in the same way as it applies to the other provinces of Canada.