

is to move that the motion of which I have just given notice be deferred from day to day until the

business contemplated in Mr. Bradley's motion has been finalised.

Report of the Finance Committee: Economic Report¹ Committee of the Whole

Mr. Hickman Mr. Chairman, when I first came to this House I had a very different opinion of what was to be done and how we were to do it. As I understood it, the Convention was to be something like a royal commission. There was certain work to be done of a fact-finding nature and I assumed that it was our duty to get these facts, examine and check, and then use them as a basis for hard and fast opinions that would be useful in deciding the state of the country and its prospects. I thought we would get down to that job like a group of businessmen and that our debates would be chiefly like the discussions that go on around a council table. I thought that once we had agreed on the question of fact, we would enter into a dignified discussion of the constitutional question. I have been surprised at the difference between my ideas of what would happen and what has actually occurred, and I regret that issues were injected into this Convention, before we had been here long enough to find our feet, that have given a different and, in my opinion, an unfortunate turn to our proceedings.

When we come down to the practical problem that was put before the Finance Committee, it must be admitted that it amounted to a matter of getting what facts we could and doing our best to try and draw the correct conclusions from them. I have listened with impatience to a good deal of silly talk about the report being full of estimates, guesses and so on. But, Mr. Chairman, neither you nor I nor any member of this House can say with certainty where he will be an hour from now.... The Finance Committee could not do any more than take what information it could get together, examine it in the light of such knowledge as we have of general conditions, and say, "In our opinion the position of this country for the next three years should be so and so"....

Mr. Hollett has rightly said that the terms of reference do not ask us to determine if this country is self-supporting. At least, they do not ask this question directly. On the other hand, reference to the conditions laid down in the Newfoundland Act for a change of the island's con-

stitution sets out that when we are again self-supporting and on request of the people, self-government will be restored. The primary condition for the restoration of self-government, which is the only alternative to the Commission that was considered by the British government, is that the island should be self-supporting. Exactly what is meant by that term of self-support may be debatable. The Finance Committee recognised that, and tried to limit its predictions to inferences that seemed completely reasonable, and to a period that might lend itself to sensible predictability. That was the only system we could work by and it was my understanding that our report, when it had been completed to our satisfaction, would be considered in the light of the problems it involved and in a decent and impartial way. The business of the Convention was that of taking the report, examining it, correcting it if it was found we had made some mistakes, and then of agreeing in the end either on our conclusions or an amendment to them. Nothing could have astonished me more than to hear the attack on the report by the member for Bonavista Centre. I resented that attack, Mr. Chairman. It was uncalled for, and it was uttered in language so insulting to the Committee and so bitter that I cannot help wondering just what was the motive behind it. I am not a politician and I came to this Convention to try and give some service to the country. I have no axe to grind and in helping to frame the report, I did my best within my personal limitations. The report presents a completely honest view of the country's position and its prospects so far as any person with some knowledge of business and finance can foresee them. Nothing was farther from my mind that I should have to come and hear that report torn to shreds in the destructive and discourteous speech made by Mr. Smallwood.... We were simply carrying out a job that had been given to us by the Convention, and the surest way to kill all thought of personal service of a public nature, is to have honest efforts subjected to the violent type of attack that the member for Bonavista Centre

¹Volume II:425.