

Mr. Chairman In the old days the asking of questions was not the time for debate. The answers could not be debated, but any explanation necessary could be made; then further questions asked if the answer was not clear.

Mr. Job I take it the idea of the Chair is that this committee should deal with the question of a programme. In view of the great importance of this finance matter, I suggest that this committee meet tomorrow and that the first item would be the question of finance, and that would enable us to meet and go ahead with that question. The setting up of a programme, as stated by Mr. Fogwill, is very important indeed....

Mr. Chairman It is evidently desirable to take these matters up.

Mr. Smallwood I agree that it is desirable to plan a programme. I agree also with Major Cashin in what he said regarding the presence of the Commissioner for Finance. But why wait for the Committee on Rules and Procedure? Decide now. If we are to get information from the finance department, then that is that.

Mr. Crummey Does it come within the rules to draft the agenda?

Mr. Chairman We can give the committee special instructions, it does not follow that they have to make the agenda.

Mr. Crummey Can the House form the agenda?

Mr. Chairman Of course, but it requires some study... I thought the committee might meet this afternoon if they wish to expedite matters.

Mr. Crosbie I think the committee should meet this afternoon. It seems to me we are going to lose a great deal of time if we do not invite the different heads of the departments here. If we are going to send questions to the departments they might be consigned to the waste paper basket.

Mr. Smallwood The questions I have submitted are typical of those that might be submitted and it would be a waste of time to ask a commissioner to come up until he had the question, and had replied in writing. When he has produced the documents then he could be here for supplementary questions arising out of his answers. Not that I have any objection to their being here, but there are times when it is much more practical to write your question.

Mr. Chairman All that would come within the purview of the committee.

Mr. Hollett Do we know what powers we have

to summon anyone, whether it be a commissioner or not? We should define our authority.

Mr. Chairman The Convention has no power to compel attendance or to compel him to answer questions. In the old days the statutory rules did not cover this and they were amended in 1890 by laying down what is known as statutory authority to subpoena witnesses and a committee would take evidence on a particular point. This was found not only desirable, but the only practical method. The witness on a particular point would attend before a select committee. They had statutory authority and these witnesses were required to answer. I am not giving a judicial opinion, of course. There is no express authority in the Convention Act giving the Convention power to subpoena witnesses.

Mr. MacDonald If we are going to discuss matters, we must have evidence. If we have no power, then our attendance seems useless. If you would point out to us where we can get such authority, it would be helpful.

Mr. Chairman I take it requests might be made by the Convention for all necessary information or for the attendance of witnesses.

Mr. Job It seems to me that it will be time for that when we find they will not attend. I think they will give us the information.

Mr. Jackman I understood that this Convention would be a fact-finding board; now I hear from you that whilst we are a fact-finding board, we are that in name only.

Mr. Chairman I did not say that. I pointed out to you, that my reading of the act did not disclose the authority to compel attendance.

Mr. Jackman If we are going to find our facts it is going to be necessary to have outside opinions, and I would like to know if it is possible for this Convention to protest to the government, if necessary, the lack of having that power, and the necessity on behalf of the electorate of Newfoundland that we should have that power.

Mr. Bradley I can quite understand the desire of every member of this Convention to have all available information and I am in accord with that idea, but there is not the slightest evidence that we are going to be refused any information. We cannot enforce it, it is true; but I do not see that there is anything to suggest that any department of the government will not have the slightest desire to refuse any legitimate information. If we