

*Newfoundland*

arbitrary action taken by the London government commission.

Reference is made to the referendum of July 22 last which gave a bare majority in favour of union. Concerning this referendum, I shall merely quote the views of Monsignor J. M. O'Neill, Bishop of Harbour Grace, and add a few personal remarks:

(Text):

I do not mean to insinuate that the confederate leaders are communists. Perhaps they are not. But I do say that they used communistic tactics to obtain the small majority they secured in the second referendum. By pitting the poor against the rich, the outports against St. John's, the protestants against the catholics, they succeeded in accomplishing the communistic aim of divide and conquer. Divide they did, perhaps for all time.

(Translation):

That gives us an inkling of the means used to secure a majority. In addition to that, reference was made to the trying conditions of 1933, when the people who were on relief were getting six cents a day. Then there was the lure of family allowances, and old age pensions, considerably higher in Canada than in Newfoundland. I believe that in Newfoundland the old age pension does not exceed \$72 per person and \$120 per couple, while here it is at least \$360 per person. The members of the imperial commission participated in the campaign in favour of the union. No stone was left unturned to reverse the wish already expressed by the Newfoundland people in favour of responsible government.

I have said that in approving this agreement we would be sharing in the violation of a pact between Newfoundland and Great Britain. As a matter of fact, when, as a result of financial difficulties and after an inquiry by a royal commission, the Newfoundland legislature sent to London a request for the temporary suspension of the constitution, the statutes show that it was agreed as follows:

(Text):

The existing form of government would be suspended until such time as the island may become self-supporting again.

It would be understood that, as soon as the island's difficulties are overcome and the country is again self-supporting, responsible government, on request from the people of Newfoundland, would be restored.

(Translation):

These clauses were incorporated in "The Newfoundland Act 1933".

Later on, in 1943, Mr. Emrys-Evans, Under-Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, commenting on this act in the British House of Commons, expressed himself as follows:

(Text):

I am quoting from page 599 of the House of Commons debates of England:

The arrangements made in 1933 included a pledge by His Majesty's government that as soon as the island's difficulties had been overcome and the country was again self-supporting, responsible government, on request from the people of Newfoundland, would be restored.

Our whole policy is governed by this undertaking.

(Translation):

In 1946 the government commission decreed that a national convention, consisting of 45 members elected by the people, be appointed to inquire into the state of the country and recommend various methods of government to a nation-wide people's referendum rather than rehabilitation of the promised responsible government.

I quote the following excerpts from the said act:

(Text):

Acts of the honourable commission of government of Newfoundland of 1946.

The National Convention Act states:

Whereas it has been decided that provision should be made for enabling the people of Newfoundland to examine the future of the island and express their considered views as to the suitable forms of government for the island, having regard to the financial and economic conditions prevailing therein, and that this provision could most appropriately be the holding of an elected national convention of Newfoundlanders;

And whereas it has been decided that the said convention should have the duty and function hereinafter in this act set forth;

And whereas it is necessary to provide for the constitution of the said convention and the election of representatives thereto and the regulation of their proceedings;

It shall be the duty and function of the convention to consider and discuss among themselves as elected representatives of the people of Newfoundland the changes that have taken place in the financial and economic situation of the island since 1934, and, bearing in mind the extent to which the high revenues of recent years have been due to wartime conditions, to examine the position of the country and to make recommendations to His Majesty's government in the United Kingdom as to possible forms of future government to be put before the people at a national referendum.

(Translation):

Having acquainted itself with the terms of union submitted by Ottawa, the national convention, appointed in 1946, suggested to the British parliament two forms of government between which the people would be asked to choose: firstly, maintenance of the present status and, secondly, restoration of responsible government. It also defeated, by 29 votes to 16, a motion recommending a third form of government, namely, union with Canada.

Notwithstanding the decision of the people's elected assembly, the British government ruled to include union with Canada on the ballot forms, even though this had been turned down by a majority of almost 2 to 1. In the referendum of June 3, 1948, the majority voted for responsible government. This was the second time, so to speak, that the people