

Newfoundland

kind which have failed twice. In each case when the national government failed they had to turn to Great Britain for a commission government to administer the affairs of the island. Having failed twice with that kind of thing, I think it is unreasonable to ask the people of Newfoundland to go back to it. If it is responsible government they are looking for, in my opinion they are getting responsible government now for the first time in the history of the island. Two votes were taken, and after they were taken there was still a majority of approximately 7,000 in favour of entering confederation. I do not think anyone can say that is undemocratic, because the whole population of the island is only equal to about three constituencies. After a lot of propaganda and educational work two votes were taken, and the majority of the people of Newfoundland who voted said they wanted to come into confederation with Canada. I think that is democratic. I think the processes employed in elections in Canada were followed in Newfoundland. The argument has been raised, what are you going to do about the 71,000 people who voted the other way? I should like to ask any member of the house, what are you going to do with the large number of people in your own riding who voted against you in the election? Whether they like you or not, they accept you as their representative. That is exactly the situation in Newfoundland. There was a 45 per cent vote in favour of union. Under the circumstances, where the use of the franchise had been out of the hands of the people of Newfoundland since 1934, and where very little educational work had been done in the matter of the ballot, to get a 45 per cent vote in favour in a vote taken under the conditions that existed reflects a good deal of credit on the people who turned out to vote.

I do not see any reason to quarrel with that. As I see it, it is our duty now not to confuse the matter any further by raising those arguments which arise from sectarian sources. On this question I have seen certain briefs which have come from Newfoundland, and which I would be ashamed to introduce in this house. It is a straight sectarian appeal that is being made to the people of Canada and to the members of this House of Commons in order to offset what, in my opinion, was a democratic vote of the people of Newfoundland.

I live close to them and have worked with many of them. I know the disabilities which handicap them at the present time; but I believe that, if we handle the matter sensibly and do not fan the flames any more than they have been fanned, if we put this agreement into effect, install good administra-

[Mr. Gillis.]

tive machinery, have members from Newfoundland in this House of Commons, and let the people of Newfoundland set up their own provincial government, the union will be successful. That is responsible government.

In my opinion they are being fooled, by a lot of propaganda they are getting now, into the belief that they are going to be dictated to and legislated for by Ottawa. The reverse is true. They will have their own government similar to our provincial governments. They will work out their own problems in the provincial field. They will have their members in this national forum to carry their message further. They will benefit from much of the social legislation for which we have had to fight over the years. I am in favour of this agreement and I think it should be carried into effect. I intend to go to Newfoundland and say what I am saying here tonight, only a lot more so. I got up on the spur of the moment because I felt I had to say these things in view of what was said by the last two speakers.

Motion agreed to and the house went into committee, Mr. Golding in the chair.

Resolution reported, read the second time and concurred in. Mr. St. Laurent thereupon moved for leave to introduce Bill No. 11, to approve the terms of union of Newfoundland with Canada.

Mr. Graydon: May I ask the Prime Minister whether the bill which is founded upon this resolution is now available for distribution?

Mr. St. Laurent: It is available. It consists of one clause, and of the terms of agreement as hon. members have now had them for some considerable time. The bill is ready for distribution and will be distributed immediately.

Motion agreed to and bill read the first time.

STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT

AMENDMENTS TO IMPLEMENT TERMS OF UNION OF NEWFOUNDLAND WITH CANADA

Hon. Stuart S. Garson (Minister of Justice) moved that the house go into committee to consider the following resolution:

That it is expedient to present a bill to amend several statutes to make them applicable to or otherwise conform with the Canadian confederation as and when Newfoundland becomes a province of Canada.

Mr. Gordon Graydon (Peel): I presume we shall follow the procedure that was followed on the previous resolution. I take it the Minister of Justice will want to make a statement now while the Speaker is in the chair.