

might be a good time to make a few observations.

The National Convention, which is now coming near its end, came into being as a result of the existence of another organisation. It might never have been called into existence if there had never existed in Newfoundland a regime known as "Government by Commission". The main reason for the existence of the National Convention lay in the desire of the United Kingdom government to ascertain whether Newfoundlanders wanted a continuation of Commission government or some other form in its place. In my opinion, the problem is probably stated in this motion of Mr. Higgins to which I now speak. I support that motion because I can admit of only two forms of government known to and experienced by contemporary Newfoundlanders — self-government and Commission government. There are other forms of government existing in the world today, all the way from Russian communism to British socialism to American or Canadian federalism, and other forms operating within the British Commonwealth which may be possible or suitable forms of government for Newfoundland. But these forms are outside the practice of government in Newfoundland and at the moment we have no means, in my opinion, of testing them accurately and fully enough to warrant asking the people of this country to make a decision on them, apart from the two which I have mentioned. Furthermore, Mr. Chairman, I do not believe that any people should be asked to choose between more than that form of government which they have and one other, at any one time. Will any delegate please tell me any other people who have been asked to do more anywhere at any time? Normally ... to make a radical change in the form of government requires many years of actively educating the people for that change. Mr. Higgins' motion covers the choice that I think should *now* be put to the people of this country.

Some 20 months ago when the Convention was being born, I had the privilege of telling groups of people now within the sound of my voice, that if they elected me as their delegate they would understand that I would be looking for that form of government which would give the greatest possible freedom, consistent with a tolerable standard of living. As this Convention comes to an end I feel that I have now a duty to perform. And after some 20 months of getting

information, comparing, studying and discussing facts, I am now ready to discharge that duty. I am ready, fully aware of the import of this matter, to give my most serious and considered opinion as to what form of government is in the best interest of Newfoundland.

Some 20 months ago, I confess, I had my doubts as to whether full self-government, which offered the greatest political freedom, could give us a tolerable standard of living. In common with other Newfoundlanders I had been conditioned, consciously or unconsciously, by the economic depression which struck me as it did many other Newfoundlanders. I had been conditioned by the obvious weaknesses of the democratic way, which had earned the phrase "decadent", until a war against dictatorship awoke the democracies into galvanised action. Like many contemporary Newfoundlanders, I had also been conditioned by the provincialism of living in an island, and I think I may also add, by the insidious propaganda of those who were weak in courage but strong in playing safe. I had almost come to believe that there were none so poor as Newfoundlanders in that depression; none so depraved as Newfoundland's politicians of that period; none so poorly endowed by nature with natural resources to work on as this island home of ours.

Later, I began to have my doubts as to whether Newfoundland poverty was even as bad as that of the depressed areas of England, or of the "Grapes of Wrath" areas in America, or many other places that could be mentioned in other countries. Reading of the bosses of American politics or the Canadian equivalents, I had begun to doubt whether alongside them our politicians were not just pikers. Still, as I say, I was in doubt. I felt I knew what Newfoundlanders wanted — that is, political freedom consistent with fair security, but I was not sure which was the best way out; considering seriously, for instance, a modified form of Commission of Government as perhaps the possible solution. In other words, I entered the Convention with an open mind. In the 20 months to which I refer I have read a lot of Newfoundland history, a lot of present day economic and political papers, and I have, in common with all you gentlemen here, had the opportunity to study, and in some measure report on the economic state of our country. I had also the opportunity, in common with six other mem-