

become concerned with constitutional propriety. But in the referendum we shall be concerned merely with the interrogative mood.

There is one further matter that should give us cause for concern in considering this whole matter of union, and that is whether union would prejudice the survival of a distinctive national culture and civilisation that we should seek to maintain. There are people in this island to whom the whole confederation issue is like a red rag to a bull, and for about much the same reason they just don't like it no how. Mention confederation, and they'll rant and they'll roar in the approved grand manner about 30 pieces of silver, and niggers in the woodpile, and selling our sacred heritage up the St. Lawrence. Indeed, there has been so much of that sort of thing going on both within and without this Convention that one has to pause to enquire if perhaps there might be a modicum of truth in it all. I must confess that I am not too clear as to just exactly what the poets and the politicians have in mind when they take to being sentimental over our sacred heritage. I remember that I did one time see a fisherman's wife shovel fish guts into a brin bag and spell it on her back to her gardens a mile away. I feel certain that that is not what they have in mind by our sacred heritage. I remember that I did one time spend February in a most picturesque little cottage nailed to a cliff beside the sea. I didn't get warm for a month, and I feel certain that the people living there didn't get warm for the winter. I feel that that is not the sacred heritage over which our poets work themselves up into ecstasies, and over which our politicians work themselves into a lather. Indeed, it must be something altogether different than the most of what one comes across in making the rounds of this country. But if by our sacred heritage the poets and the politicians mean that we know in this island a culture and civilisation so different, and so much more advanced than the culture and civilisation of the North American mainland that they are worth any sacrifice to preserve them, they had better stop wool-gathering on Mount Olympus, and come down and walk among the people and learn how the people live. You know, it could be that the best authority on the desirability of baby bonuses would be the people

who have the babies.

I have come to conclude that there would not be involved in confederation any issue of the preservation of a distinct national culture and civilisation. Now that is not to say, mind you, that we have not evolved our own customs, our own institutions, our own peculiar way of life. We have. It so happens that we are the inheritors of what I have sometimes called a fish and brewis culture, of which the apex in song is the "come-all-ye" and of which as good an example in folk custom as any other is a Codroy Valley "milling".¹ Of that fish and brewis culture I am as proud as any Newfoundlander. It is true that we are the inheritors of a great national tradition of bravery against the seas, of heroism defying the sea to do its worst — bravery and heroism exemplified for all time on a bleak October day on the bleak Labrador coast when a man named Jackman did 27 times head into the storm and 27 times come ashore with a human life on his back.² It is true that in this land we are the inheritors of a great Christian tradition; that at the end of every week, after we have braved the sea and dug the land and cut the pulpwood, we do still after the manner of our fathers land gather in a thousand churches to pray as our fathers prayed.... All these things are true. It is true too that all these things can remain to be so in the event of confederation. The things dearest to our hearts in this land will not in the event of union be at issue. I give it to you as my considered opinion, for what it is worth, that if the confederation alternate shall come to confront us in the referendum, that there shall be involved therein no issue involving our distinct character as Newfoundlanders, no issue involving our national honour, no issue involving our distinct culture and way of life.

I come now to this final statement of my position in this matter. To such extent as I am qualified to judge, the proposed arrangements appear to me to contain nothing that constitutes a legitimate impediment in the way of their being submitted to the Newfoundland people. I can say in conscience I know of no good and sufficient reason why the Newfoundland people should not have the opportunity to vote upon the confederation issue if they so desire. I will vote to give them that opportunity. I will vote for the motion before

¹A social gathering among women to prepare wool (a fulling bee).

²Captain W. Jackman's famous rescue of people from the schooner *Sea Slipper* occurred in 1867.