

The question of expense may be raised. Let me point out that the total amount paid by the Canadian National Railways out of its revenues in respect of pensions is only 2.6 per cent. I make this appeal to the minister. I ask him to give consideration to assuring the railway employees of the Canadian National Railways that degree of security after retirement which other classes in this country are receiving today.

Mr. FREDERIC DORION (Charlevoix-Saguenay): I should like to take advantage of this debate to express my personal views on a matter which is of very great importance to the people of this country, and especially to the province of Quebec, namely, the question of the ownership of the Labrador territory. I have given some study to that question; I was particularly interested in it because I have the honour to represent the only constituency in the dominion that is bounded by the Labrador territory.

When the delegates of Newfoundland came to Ottawa last summer and met the representatives of the Canadian government to study the possibility of Newfoundland entering into the Canadian confederation, I endeavoured to follow as closely as possible the discussion which took place at the time. The reports given us by the newspapers failed to give us a full account of the discussions, and when we were called for the present session I was glad to have the opportunity of reading the report which was published by the government in two volumes entitled: "Report of meetings between delegates from the national convention of Newfoundland and representatives of the government of Canada."

I was also much interested in reading the letter written by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) on October 29, 1947, to the governor of Newfoundland, together with the "proposed arrangements for the entry of Newfoundland into confederation" which was annexed to the letter, and printed in a separate pamphlet, under the caption: "Terms believed to constitute a fair and equitable basis for union of Newfoundland with Canada should the people of Newfoundland desire to enter into confederation."

Notwithstanding the vote which was taken in the national convention of Newfoundland some days ago, I am sure that the question involved is not disposed of, and we may well rest assured that in the near future the question of the entry of Newfoundland into our confederation will be the subject of further discussions. That is the reason why I feel it is our duty to study as closely as possible the

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

conditions under which the Canadian government would see fit to accept this new province in our confederation.

We must not forget either that our neighbour to the south seems to be very much interested in the settlement of that matter. Not later than last Thursday, January 29, we could read in the newspapers a dispatch from Washington as follows:

An unofficial, tentative proposal from Newfoundland for "closer association" with the United States is receiving scant attention here this morning. It would call for interference by the United States before the approaching plebiscite in the colony to the extent of a declaration promising support for an independent government and for help in developing a steel industry in Newfoundland and Labrador which, it claims, would save the United States from becoming dependent on Canada for iron or steel.

Everyone knows that when we speak of developing a steel or iron industry in that part of the continent we have in mind the territory known as Labrador on the mainland, much more than the island of Newfoundland itself. That is the reason why it is of the utmost importance to ascertain whether that territory belongs really to Newfoundland. In the course of my remarks I will endeavour to show, Mr. Speaker, that notwithstanding the report of the judicial committee of the privy council made in March, 1927, that territory still belongs to the province of Quebec. Mark you, sir, it must be noted that the privy council did not render a judgment, a judicial decision; it was no more than a report on a reference which, as I will show later on, was badly drafted, incomplete, not properly presented, and proper action on it has never been taken.

In reading the report of the conference which took place last summer, I noticed that quite a number of questions were asked by the Newfoundland delegation for the purpose of establishing the position of the parties in regard to the matters involved in the questions. I was quite surprised to read at page 158 of volume 2 of the report the following question regarding Labrador:

Question: If Newfoundland joined Canada, would Labrador remain a part of the province of Newfoundland?

Answer: The Canadian government has always felt that it is bound by the award made by the judicial committee of the privy council in 1927 with respect to the Labrador boundary. The Canadian government assumes that, if Newfoundland became a province of Canada, Newfoundland Labrador would be a part of that province. Section 3 of the British North America Act of 1871 might also be consulted. It is clear from this section that the parliament of Canada cannot alter the boundaries of a province without the consent of the legislature of the province concerned.