

back some knowledge of the interior and the wealth it contained.¹ Then in 1855 Newfoundlanders were given responsible government — but I shouldn't say they were given it — no, rather that they won it, which they did. Now if ever a people were politically immature, they were that. They had barely 20 years of representative government, since 1832, that Nova Scotia had had since 1758, Prince Edward Island since 1769, New Brunswick since 1784, Upper and Lower Canada since 1791. And the granting of responsible government to these other British North American colonies had come anywhere from six to 14 years before Newfoundland. The Newfoundland people in 1855 had had less than 25 years to prepare for mastership in their own house, full self-government for which those others had been preparing for 60 to 80 years. Newfoundlanders began self-government with two strikes on them, as we say.

But they had the stuff. They were no better, no worse than their neighbours, even though the system of education which had been slowly and painfully built up by the various denominations had its beginnings early in the 19th century, little more than 100 years ago. On the other hand, in the neighbouring provinces of British North America, and in the new republic of the United States, schools, colleges and even universities had been in existence, from the middle of the 17th century onwards, permitted by law and encouraged, as they were forbidden and discouraged in this island.

And then, Mr. Chairman, even when responsible government was granted, it was not at all that complete and full authority some of us believe it was. Actually Newfoundland was never quite free; never wholly independent. Hence the pages of our history contain episode after episode of struggle between the oldest colony and the mother country, principally over fishery rights, which were a bone of contention, not only between England and France (witness the French Shore), but between England and the United States as well. There are dozens of instances, great events in our story, that recount how Newfoundland's political leaders went as delegations of a sovereign people to London, to Ottawa,

to Halifax and to Washington, and by sheer persistence and dogged courage buttressed by shrewd and farseeing minds, gradually weakened and finally broke these outside controls on our country and its people, till in 1904 the French were gone, and in 1910 the Americans withdrew — 1904, 1910, only yesterday.

Mr. Chairman, I did not propose when I set out to speak on this motion to give the Convention or the country a history lesson. But it seems to me that without a study, even a cursory one, of that history, none of us can properly assess just what our maligned responsible governments did for this country. As I said at the beginning, our collapse of 1934 was deeply rooted in the facts of that history. As I pointed out the other day, the commission form of government was suggested for this country in 1895, when she was in financial straits after the bank crash. But the men of that time were made of sterner stuff; they rose to the occasion, and Newfoundland weathered the storm and went on to the 20th century and an age of new and greater development. Although we are still very close to the events of 1933 and 1934, it is fair to admit, and has been admitted in many responsible quarters, that Newfoundland was asked to pay too high a price for her solvency. Professor Harold Innis, author of *The Cod Fisheries*, declared with reference to this,

The decline of bankruptcy as a method of adjustment brought the collapse of responsible government. It was significant that a banker occupied a prominent position on the Royal Commission which recommended its abolition. When Newfoundland's dictatorship as a whole refused to accept the highly questionable policy of one of its members, Mr. Thomas Lodge, he argued that, "To have assumed responsibility for the good government of Newfoundland from altruistic motives and to have achieved economic rehabilitation might have cost the British taxpayer a few millions. It would have added to the prestige of the British Empire." But that will not do. "For those who believe in democracy the prestige of the British Empire must have suffered a blow with the destruction of its fundamental basis in the oldest

¹W.E. Cormack.