

Convention, carry out the by-laws and rules of debate and enforce rules of order. That is all the Chairman of the Convention, acting as Chairman, can be expected to do.

If I have erred at all, it has been on the side of leniency — leniency to all members, for I recognised that 14 years without any form of democratic institutions did not lend itself to the fostering or the development of skilled parliamentary debaters, well versed in the rules and order of debate.

The position of Chairman, of course, takes me out of the realm of debate. I have never taken advantage of my undoubted right to place the Secretary temporarily in the Chair and go to the floor for the purpose of expressing my views. I had the right to do that, but I have never done it. That right I would only exercise upon the gravest of issues.

In some respects the position of Chairman is exceptional. Because of his position it would be entirely improper for him to engage in the cut and thrust of debate. He is therefore in all well-ordered organisations held to be immune from personal attack. In fact such an attack, whether justified or not, has the effect of destroying his usefulness in office; it impugns his integrity, whether justifiable or not; moreover, such an attack is unfair to the Chairman for he cannot adequately defend himself without taking part in the ruck of the debate on the floor. Being in that position, the Chairman of this Convention should, by all the canons of decency, propriety and fair play be immune from attack or insinuation so long as he faithfully carries out the rules of the house.

Once already my integrity has been called into question in this House. I refer to the debate on the report of the London delegation when I made a specific and unmistakable statement about the form of our conversations with the British government. May I say I appreciate very highly the co-operation of the two members of the delegation who stood in their places and supported my statements. I overlooked that incident. It was the first of its kind and I was willing to attribute it to the heat of debate. Now another such occasion has arisen, and I have to inform this Convention that I have not the slightest intention of tolerating further attack in a position where I cannot defend myself.

I am perfectly well aware that a sort of campaign of slander has been carried on against me by persons whose views I am not in agreement with. I am supposed to be in receipt of a sizeable salary as Chairman, even the amount is named, when the simple truth is I never asked for any salary, I never was offered any, I have never received a cent, and lastly, I would not take it. I have received exactly the same salary as you gentlemen received and nothing more. I pay scant attention to these slanders. What I do object to is the slightest hint or insinuation that as Chairman I have failed at any time to be fair, impartial and honourable to all members.

This Chairmanship has meant nothing to me; nothing but additional work, worry and physical discomfort. I will not tolerate any attempt to call my impartiality as Chairman into question. I shall resume my seat in the main body of this chamber and confine my activities and exercise my right as an elected member; but before doing so I would offer a last word of sound advice which you would do well to heed. It is this: remember always, please, that the eyes of the people of Newfoundland are upon us; they are watching our every move and listening to our every word; they are weighing us. At times I fear we have gone far to bring democratic institutions into contempt; we have gone far to create a distaste for all forms of elective government. I warn you to remember that not we, but the people of this country are the masters, and we had better not try their tolerance too far if we value our reputations as public men. Gentlemen, this Convention is without a Chairman.

[The Chairman left the Convention chamber]

Mr. Smallwood Where do we go from here?

Mr. Higgins I move that in the absence of the Chairman, the Secretary take the Chair.

Mr. Smallwood He cannot do it. No one but the Chairman can authorise him to take the Chair.

[The Secretary took the Chair]

Mr. Butt Assuming for the moment the rules we have followed are proper, I would like to give notice, or with the consent of the House I now move that the Commission of Government be requested immediately to appoint, with the utmost dispatch, a new Chairman in the place of Mr. Bradley, resigned.

Mr. Smallwood I draw your attention to the fact that only the Chairman can put anyone else in the