

As for what I think about the Commission of Government, I reserve that for a later date when forms of government are discussed. At this particular time I am concerned with our terms of reference. When I contested St. John's West ... I foresaw the stretching and manipulating of these terms of reference which could be carried out by unscrupulous or undiscerning men. If I could have been assured that the terms of reference would be interpreted as I believed, I would not, most likely, be in this House today. But sensing then what I realise now, I could not leave that much to blind chance. One of the main reasons that impelled me to seek election was to help to forestall any move to submerge the identity of this country into any larger unit without our first going through an intermediate state, in which the people of this country under a duly constituted and responsible government could thrash out vital and irrevocable issues in a state of complete autonomy.

I have made this brief review for a very definite purpose. I wish to make it quite clear to everyone concerned that this attitude, this stand, which I have followed and intend to follow is not something born of recent months. It is to prove, if there is any doubt, that I have hewed to the line of those convictions surely and steadfastly, for a principle which I believe in....

I believe in Newfoundland, in its people, in its resources, in its potentialities. I believe that an independent Newfoundland offers a far better opportunity for Newfoundlanders today than it ever did. I believe that the time for union, especially with Canada, is past; that half a century ago, after the bank crash, or three-quarters of a century ago, when the Maritime provinces were going in, were far more appropriate times than now. We have come a long way since then. We have now the beginnings of a country, of a nation; the increasing population, the diversification of industry, a strategic position with immense bargaining power, the spreading grasp of local and world affairs which was only the possession of a few. In short, we are now on the way to becoming a people, a real Newfoundland people, with a solidifying national consciousness, a national culture. Indeed, I fail completely to understand how Mr. Smallwood, who contributed so much

in the past, to that national consciousness and culture, can reconcile himself with his more recent declarations of defeat and despair, that seeks to make solvency the main condition for Newfoundlanders' governing themselves in an insolvent world. I believe that having held aloof from absorption, from union, so long, that the step at this time would be next to fatal.

Others will differ, of course. Some of them will do so sincerely; others out of motive and design. So be it. I have said what I will say at much greater length and in far more detail when we reach the debate on forms of government. When the Hon. Mr. Job introduced his motion some weeks ago¹ I voted against it, for it included the confederation question which directly concerns the sovereignty of Newfoundland. I did not speak on the motion, because my previous attitude on this matter was unequivocal; it was plain. I did not say I was an anticonfederate but thought we ought to see the terms when I opposed the October motion.² For the question in my mind was, "What terms?" I shall have something to say later on that point.

I said then and I reaffirm now, that "the final decision on confederation must rest with the people of Newfoundland, and that they should be asked to register that decision only after negotiations to secure the best offer of terms from Canada have been completed on their behalf by a sovereign government of their own choosing. If these negotiations were to be considered under any other auspices, the terms secured would be bound to be suspect, and even if confederation were achieved in this manner, it would leave a heritage of discontent, which might well imperil the satisfactory operation of the agreement." That statement was made in an impartial paper on "The Political and Financial Implications of Confederation" which was read before the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Newfoundland Branch, by Prof. A.M. Fraser, M.A., of the Memorial University College on March 15, 1946 — months before the National Convention was even elected. The fact that Prof. Fraser lectures at Memorial University College and Professor Wheare at Oxford is no reason why I should accept the latter's opinion in preference to the former's.

¹February 4, 1947, p. 281.

²October 28, 1946, p. 96.