

committees, each of which would consider a certain phase of the country's business and economy and place its report before the Convention for debate.

The Convention has been in session now something over six weeks. The committees have been working something over four weeks. One interim report has been referred to its committee. The first two actual reports, the education and forestry reports have just this day been submitted for debate. Yet, it is at this point, that Mr. Smallwood, the "self-appointed apostle of confederation" as he has been called, chooses to introduce his resolution. In other words before the Convention has been given even half a chance to get a true picture of the Newfoundland scene, it is proposed that we should send a delegation post-haste to find what Canada will give us if we are well-behaved and come round as quickly as possible to Mr. Smallwood's way of thinking. Yet if the Convention agrees on its findings that the country is self-supporting, and can continue to be self-supporting, then there is no necessity for us to seek aid from anyone. On the other hand if the findings are negative and assistance must be sought, then it is sound logic that we may have to go to the United Kingdom, as well as Canada and perhaps even the United States. But all this is still somewhat in the future, and I submit that the motion is premature — it is in plain everyday language "jumping the gun."

I do not propose to go into the constitutionality of the matter at this stage, for that would be just as premature as Mr. Smallwood's resolution. But I would like to make one observation in this regard. The terms of reference, which are beginning to look pretty sick as time goes on, have been stretched, twisted and shrunk to suit every point of view, so that they may be said to permit almost anything, and at the same time allow nothing. On the one hand the Convention has no powers. It is not a governing body; it cannot subpoena witnesses to come before it; it cannot compel public servants to divulge what should be public information. On the other hand a member of the Convention seeks at this stage, in the midst of the very preliminaries, to endow it with the sovereign powers of a government to enable a delegation of its members to go to the capital of another country and there discuss terms of union. It is very inconsistent.

At this point I would like to refer to an excellent paper on the "Political and Financial Implications of Confederation" which was read before the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Newfoundland Branch, by Professor A.M. Fraser, M.A., of the Memorial University College on March 15, 1946. Professor Fraser first declared that since he is not a native-born Newfoundlander he would not presume to appraise the sentiments of the people on this fundamental question and preferred not to express any personal opinions. His impartial paper dealt only with the political and financial set-up in the event that Newfoundland were to ever enter the confederation. But this he did say: "At the outset, I would, however ... say that in my opinion, the final decision on Confederation, as far as Newfoundland is concerned, 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 conducted 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."

There are without doubt many eminent constitutional and legal minds in this country and outside who will support that opinion. I am a young man who hopes to spend the rest of his life in this country and contribute to its betterment, and when I am as old as Mr. Smallwood is now, please God, I do not want to be accused of helping to sell this country up the St. Lawrence. The public has a short memory, and those who, dazzled by the immediate prospect of temporary advantages without considering the implications, wish Newfoundland to enter confederation with Canada or any other state on a referendum vote, would be the first if the deal later went sour to revile the National Convention, the body that made possible such political conjuring.

If these arguments against the acceptance of this resolution, at this particular time, are not sufficient, and I believe they are, there is one further objection, the strongest I have to make, and one which involves, or should involve, a breach of the privilege of the members of this