

vote on confederation. In my opinion we are, by our terms of reference, and after our discussions, to make recommendations on suitable forms of government to be placed before the people at the referendum. How can we conscientiously recommend a form of government to go on the ballot paper when we are not fully informed as to how it will affect our people? I cannot but vote against the motion.

Mr. Chairman, before I resume my seat I wish to unite with other speakers in recording my sincere appreciation of the able and impartial manner in which you have conducted proceedings since you assumed your position as chairman. I would also take this opportunity of thanking all delegates, particularly my friend Mr. Vardy, for the big hand you gave, during my absence, on the occasion of my recent marriage. I assure you that both Mrs. MacCormack and I are deeply appreciative of your good wishes. I thank you.

**Mr. Watton** Mr. Chairman, I wish to address myself very briefly to the resolution now before us, namely that confederation be submitted to the people in the forthcoming referendum.

Within the next few days this Convention will come to an end, and in spite of its shortcomings, I feel that it has done a lot of good and has justified its existence, if for no other reason than that it has aroused the people out of a sleep that has lasted for 14 years. Throughout the life of this Convention I have tried to be as fair as I possible could. I have not tried to hide or deprive the people of this country from obtaining any information that this Convention has been able to give, in spite of the fact that it has been stated here that those who do not favour submitting confederation to the people are trying to deprive the people of something that is rightfully theirs. I plead not guilty to that charge. I am not going to vote in favour of this motion under the present circumstances. I shall try as best I can to give reasons why I make that statement.

Our terms of reference provide that we shall examine and discuss among ourselves the changes that have taken place in our economy and recommend forms of government as a result of our findings. It did not specify or even suggest that we should examine or discuss the economic or financial position of any other country. We were not empowered to do any such thing. Proof

of that was supplied as a result of a conference held between the Commission of Government and a delegation of this Convention. It was pointed out that this Convention had no power to discuss or negotiate (I think that is the word used) with the USA or Canada on economic, financial or political questions. We were politely told that such negotiations were none of our business, and that it was a job to be dealt with strictly between governments. In spite of that, it was still maintained that we should send a delegation to Ottawa to ascertain terms of federal union, with absolutely no power to dispute or question any proposals that might be put forward by the Canadian government. Mr. Chairman, what a position for an independent and free people to be placed in! And we are expected by the advocates of confederation to place before the people of this country a situation such as that! No matter what we find in those terms which we do not understand, or any points on which we are clear, we are still urged to recommend it as being a form of government, without being able to question or dispute any of these things. To my mind, Mr. Chairman, the situation, to say the least, is ridiculous.

As a body of ordinary Newfoundlanders, I maintain that a pretty good job has been done as far as investigating our position as a country. I think that the reports tabled in this Convention point to that fact. We know probably as much about the country as a newly-elected government would know, with only 16 months of experience. We send a delegation to Ottawa to get the terms. What position are they in? The Canadian government gives them what? Precious little. They did not even give them the terms to bring back, in spite of all their knowledge of Newfoundland. Even if they had been given the terms, what could they have done? Absolutely nothing. They could read them, that was all. Any clause in those terms which they thought could be improved upon, or which they thought could be made more fair or equitable, they could do nothing about it; and worst of all, this whole Convention could do nothing about it. But Mr. Chairman, if they had the power to do something about it, how different the situation would be. I would have had no hesitation in recommending it. Even if we had that power to negotiate or bargain, and had used it without being able to alter any of these terms,