

*Newfoundland*

interests of Canada because above all we lay claim to the title of plain Canadians. But that remark, as made by the hon. member, makes me wonder what our Quebec nationalists would have said if, for instance, we Quebec Canadians and Canadian citizens had let Newfoundland join the United States. Those same nationalists would then have cried shame. They would have described in terms which I would not dare utter in this house—because I have no use for the kind of language to which they resort—as a cowardly dereliction of duty the stand which they charge us with having failed to take.

In my opinion, Newfoundland will be not only a physical but a moral asset to this country. During my six years in the Royal Canadian Navy, it was my privilege to be associated during rather difficult times with companions from Newfoundland, so that I was then able to appreciate their patriotism and high moral qualities. That is why I say with the utmost assurance that Newfoundland's entry into confederation will be for my country, for Canada, a moral asset that will further promote Canada's development and progress. Then the hon. member for Beauharnois-Laprairie expressed great apprehension. If I understand him correctly, he said it might be a threat to our French minority to bring into our confederation the people of Newfoundland who do not share our traditions or way of life. In this respect, I should like to inform the hon. member for Beauharnois-Laprairie, if he does not already know it, that 31 per cent of Newfoundland's population are Roman Catholics; in other words, that 31 per cent of Newfoundlanders share the faith of our ancestors in Quebec. In that regard, I have no fear whatsoever because, as I said a while ago, since I had the privilege of associating with people from Newfoundland while serving during the war, I was in a position to appreciate the sterling qualities of these good folk.

Moreover, Newfoundland's population is made up largely of fishermen, worthy citizens whose trade is the same as that of the majority of my constituents, people whose work ever pits them against the elements, who toil and struggle for a livelihood and are used to facing issues squarely and judging on their merits. They have no time to waste on party matters of a purely local character, or on jingoism. Mr. Speaker, the hon. member also mentioned in his speech, if I understood him correctly, that the federal government was seeking to amend the Canadian constitution without consulting the provinces. He made this remark in such a general way that I believe it is my duty to take up this statement. No doubt he has forgotten that in

a memorable radio address given some ten days ago, our leader, the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent), referring to the possible effects of the abolition of appeals to the privy council, stated that consideration should be given to the means of amending our constitution. But on the very next day, here in the house, he hastened to add, in reply to a question by the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew), that such an amendment to the constitution should not be carried out without the consent of the provinces. Therefore, the hon. member's remarks were not fully accurate and, no matter how he qualified them, do not concern solely, I am sure, the matter now under discussion.

Mr. Speaker, ever since the opening of this session, we have heard a whole medley of contradictory statements. In the first place the attitude of the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) has been most thoroughly inconsistent.

As I was saying before, I was at first unwilling to take part in this debate. This was because I believed that the leader of the opposition was sincere in objecting, on the first day of this session, to any delay in debating the speech from the throne. I was therefore unwilling to delay further that particular debate by taking part myself in this one. However we have seen how, subsequently, the leader of the opposition turned about completely and, through a series of amendments, himself contributed to delay further the adoption of the address in reply to the speech from the throne. As a matter of fact, by moving the amendment to the resolution which is now before this house, he maintains the totally inconsistent attitude which he has taken since the beginning of the session. Was he not serious when he opposed a resolution put forward by the prime minister, which called for the adjournment of the debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne?

Is it any wonder now that we find in his statements such glaring inconsistencies as those submitted to us yesterday by some hon. members who preceded me in this debate?

The leader of the opposition has completely changed his mind. He has made a right-about turn on the question of autonomy. He no longer talks about centralization, about a country made up of a central office with a branch in each province. But today he clamours for wider powers for a more complete autonomy in favour of the provinces, which, in his estimation, should enjoy even wider powers than those of the central government.

But I find it strange that these same provinces to which the hon. the leader of the opposition would grant so much autonomy