

fortunately there is no need to do it, for the details have all been published by newspaper and radio, and a long, if somewhat blurred and distorted debate on the proposals and terms has taken place in this chamber. I deem it necessary, however, to endeavour to correct some misconceptions and misinterpretations which have been placed upon these proposals, to dissipate some unworthy and even sneering references to some of the results of confederation, to dispose of certain unfounded charges of dishonesty and double-dealing made against governmental bodies, and to draw the attention of this Convention and the people of the country to the grave uncertainties which await us in this world of seething unrest and insecurity.

Up until today an unfortunate illness has made it impossible for me to take any part in the debate on the confederation proposals which were introduced by my motion of last October. I have, however, followed the debate in my home, and I am compelled to admit that it was a most depressing and disappointing experience. Never in my whole life have I known the quality of debate upon so important a matter to fall to such a low level. During that period I was in the very heart of the largest fishing town of this country,¹ and I have to admit that the people there, and I feel that the whole country shared the feeling, were shocked by the refusal of many members of this Convention to treat this great question with the sincere impartiality and the friendly spirit of co-operation in search of truth which its importance demanded. I can assure you, sir, that their comments were caustic rather than complimentary, and they were unanimous, nor did they hesitate to express their disgust and indignation. Sir, I could not deny the justice of their criticism — it was too true.

While the people were expecting what was their undoubted right, a straightforward and impartial and co-operative discussion of what confederation would mean to them, they were treated instead to a senseless barrage of heated misrepresentation and distortion, to pretty prejudice and personal antagonism. The Convention became a veritable battleground. Instead of making an effort to understand the terms and make them plain to our people, some members seemed determined to make it appear that confederation is such a complicated and confused question that

nobody in or out of the Convention could possibly understand it. I shall not soon forget the disgraceful climax to that unworthy campaign of obstruction which I had the misfortune to witness here on December 12 last, when we were closing for the Christmas vacation, when a majority of members walked out of the chamber with the perfectly obvious intention of preventing any reply to several hours of twisting and distorting of the Canadian proposals.

Now there is a very urgent need indeed that in the interests of clear thinking a number of misconceptions that have grown up or been thrown up around this whole question should be corrected. Amongst these, sir, is the utterly foolish notion that the very fact that we are discussing confederation at all is the result of a breach of faith by Britain, that if she had carried out her obligation to us no confederation question would have arisen at all. Great currency has been given to this notion. Indeed it has been actively and sedulously circulated. This notion has grown into the more vicious and equally unfounded charge that Britain is false, that Britain is not to be trusted, that Britain is trying to cheat us out of our rights, including the right of responsible government, that Britain is actively plotting to thrust us into confederation whether we want it or not, that Britain is plotting to retain Commission government. In fact about the only political crime that is not charged up to Britain today is that of trying to foist responsible government on us. It is in no way surprising, therefore, to find that almost invariably, if not exclusively, every one of these charges is voiced by a supporter of responsible government.

Now what are the bases of these charges? The argument runs something like this: in 1933-34 the British government promised that when Newfoundland became self-supporting responsible government would be restored if the people wanted it. Newfoundland is now technically self-supporting, and it remains therefore only for Britain to give us back responsible government and clear out. "Give us back what we had, give us back responsible government", that is the cry. What are the real facts? It is quite true that the British government of 1933 did promise to restore responsible government to Newfoundland if and when she became self-supporting, and if

¹Bonavista.