

the early stages of the debate in the autumn of 1946, I said that if a referendum were to be held tomorrow I would not vote for a retention of Commission of Government. In January 1948, I see no reason to change my opinion. As Mr. Keough said, Commission of Government may have brought system and method to the civil service; Commission of Government may have introduced many long-wanted reforms; Commission of Government may have expanded our public health service. With that I entirely agree, but gentlemen, Commission of Government has outlived its usefulness, it has nothing to offer for the road ahead. It was a necessary expedient. But the measure of its performance in the past, under circumstances vastly different from what they will be tomorrow, can be no prediction of its achievement in the future. In fact, sir, the whole concept of such a form of government is wrong. Any form of government which is in itself the essence of naked power, and which shows scant respect for, and little concern with popular public opinion, cannot in my opinion be a good form of government — in short, it is a dictatorship. Let me illustrate, let me take you back to the northeast coast, where 15,000 people living between Gambo and Carmanville are isolated from December until April. Their economy is for the most part built on the fisheries. All supplies and local products are, of necessity, waterhauled. From time to time intelligent and progressive citizens have petitioned for a road system to link up those northern communities. Such a road system would naturally be a costly project and maybe not commercially profitable; but from an economic standpoint it might well lead to a wider diversification of the fisheries there; it might enable fishermen to rush their product to a centralised curing plant, and their salt product to a sheltered shipping point. It might well be a wise expenditure of public monies heretofore called 'dole', but petitions of popular opinion on such matters are given scant attention. In more cases than one, high officials of government have little inside knowledge of the real wants of the people. But yet without stint or scruple that same government will expend many thousands of dollars on a macadamised Road De Luxe,<sup>1</sup> while fishermen and labourers in Bonavista Bay and Notre Dame Bay wallow in mud, and get pushed around with

a lot of other unfortunates in the cabin of a 40-foot motor boat to try to make the railheads at Gambo or Lewisporte some 40 miles away.

Mr. Chairman, our hard-working toilers want more than three square meals and a tight roof, and they deserve more, and I would repeat that they do not take very kindly to the policy of any member of this Convention or government that would put the Avalon first and the rest of the country afterwards. I see no earthly reason why we should retain the Commission government. Mr. Smallwood said a few days ago that there are many who would vote for it. I do not follow that line of reasoning. Do they believe that Commission of Government brought prosperity to Newfoundland? Are they forgetting the lean years of six cents a day dole? Do they think Commission should be credited with the upsurge of prosperity created by the influx of scores of millions of dollars of foreign capital into this country during the war years? Or would they credit the Commission government with world prosperity — a prosperity engineered by the warmongering of that misguided prophet called Hitler. Furthermore, sir, in the event of our being financially unsound in the not too distant future, are the adherents of this form of government asking themselves now, do they expect the brave but impoverished mother country, now battling inflation with a fierce austerity programme, to come to our aid? The Englishman is a gallant fellow, but just now he is up to his neck with his own worries, and it is just plain folly to expect help from the imperial government should we fall upon lean times. It is just not good cricket and it is unreasonable. With no assurance of help, financial or otherwise, let us ask ourselves, "Should we retain Commission of Government?" The answer should be emphatically, "No." It would indeed be a grave mistake. Our date with tomorrow is going to be a long one, not just another temporary expedient. We must take the long-range view, for our choice may well be the government of a century. In summing up this phase of the motion, I repeat that I will not vote for Commission and I will not recommend Commission. It has outlived its usefulness and should go. I repeat again, I am unable to recommend it to my constituents or to Newfoundlanders generally.

Responsible government was suspended in

<sup>1</sup>In the west end of St. John's.