

Commission, I find that I uttered these words:

As a temporary measure, I am wholeheartedly in favour of the changes proposed, drastic as they are. My reasons for supporting them are:

Firstly, because the report of the royal commission and the proposals of His Majesty's Government breathe deep earnestness and great sympathy with our situation throughout its many pages, and because the offer is an especially generous one.

Secondly, because I believe that stringent and drastic measures alone can save us from ourselves in this serious crisis, and

Thirdly, because I see no other alternative except the disgrace and increased misery that default would bring in its train.

I believe that it will probably be found necessary, as time goes on, and possibly within a decade, to resort once more to some form of representation, and I also believe that when the need is evident, this will not be grudged to us by those who are offering a helping hand at this present juncture.

What form this representation may take I dare not prophesy, but it has been shown beyond doubt that our present form of full responsibility is not suited to a large country with a small population. A large section of our population is so scattered and isolated and out of touch with its fellow citizens, that it is extremely difficult for it to understand and digest the principles of good government. We want something more simple and must endeavour to avoid what has been aptly described as "the trappings of an elephant on the back of a cat."

I do not think there is any need for me to take back these words, sir, as I am still of that same opinion. I did not believe then, and I do not believe now that there was any deep-laid plot to deprive us of our rights, and on the other hand believe that Great Britain was conscientiously anxious to help us, and that although the Amulree Report was in many respects wrong, its motives were, on the whole, perfectly honest and designed to help us. It must be remembered, sir, that at that time no one for a moment contemplated that the period of Commission of Government, with its lack of representation, would extend as it has done for a period of nearly

14 years; but I think it will be agreed that circumstances beyond our control have been mainly responsible for this, namely the recent war. The utmost limit of time envisaged for its continuance when introduced was ten years.

Commission of Government was considered by many to be a means of providing a thinking period during which, with the assistance of the Mother country, our finances would be straightened out and our departments reorganised. It was thought that this could be achieved without the bickering, and oftentimes unfair attack that is and must be associated with party government. It was also thought that government by commission would still be government in the interests of Newfoundland and we were not, in view of the scheme suggested under which three of the Commissioners were Newfoundlanders, afraid that strictly Newfoundland interests would be disregarded.

As you are aware, sir, it seems to be clear from opinions expressed at this Convention that Newfoundland interests have been, in some cases, neglected, especially in connection with the leasing, without consideration for Newfoundland, for 99 years of certain of our territories to a foreign government, though an admittedly very friendly one. Owing to the secrecy of the Commission's deliberations we do not know to what extent our Newfoundland Commissioners fought for our interests in these matters; but it is fair to assume that as Newfoundlanders they did their best in at least mildly protesting against long leases; and probably felt that anything stronger than a mild protest would be, and perhaps was quite useless in view of the fact that they were in a minority on the Commission. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that they must have been influenced while the war was in progress by the fact that everything was of minor importance except steps for winning the war; and one can quite understand their disinclination to make themselves strongly objectionable at that time, entirely apart from any personal considerations.

The Commission government, in the appointment of whose personnel the people of Newfoundland have had no say, is admittedly all wrong in principle, and this our Commissioners themselves will admit and have admitted. Again, it is impossible to argue that some form of responsible government would not be right. I would