

PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT

On July 30, 1948, the Prime Minister, Mr. Mackenzie King, issued the following statement:

As Prime Minister of Canada, I sent to the Governor of Newfoundland on October 29th, 1947, a statement which made known to the people of Newfoundland the terms believed by the Canadian Government to constitute a fair and equitable basis of union between Newfoundland and Canada, should the people of Newfoundland desire to enter into confederation. In my covering letter, forwarding that statement, I said:

"Should the people of Newfoundland indicate clearly and beyond all possibility of misunderstanding their will that Newfoundland should become a province of Canada on the basis of the proposed arrangements, the Canadian Government, subject to the approval of Parliament, would for its part be prepared to take the necessary constitutional steps to make the union effective at the earliest practicable date."

On Thursday, July 22nd, the people of Newfoundland voted on the following alternative forms of government for that country.

- (a) Responsible Government as it existed in 1933 prior to the establishment of Commission of Government.
- (b) Confederation with Canada.

The result of this vote to date, as communicated officially to the Government of Canada by the Governor of Newfoundland, is as follows:

Out of a total registered

vote of about 176,000, the vote for Confederation is 77,869 and for responsible government 71,464. The total majority to date is thus over 6,400. It is estimated that about 500 votes are still to be counted but this will not materially alter the result. It would also appear that close to 85 percent of the eligible voters exercised their right to vote.

It will be noted from the above that a definite majority of the very high percentage of the electorate of Newfoundland which voted, has expressed its wishes in favour of Confederation. It would seem, therefore, that the result of the plebiscite in favour of union between the two countries is "clear and beyond possibility of misunderstanding." This result was attained without any trace of influence or pressure from Canada.

The Government welcomes, and I believe the people of Canada also welcome, the result of the plebiscite. We have ascertained that for its part the United Kingdom Government, which at present is responsible for the administration of Newfoundland under the United Kingdom-Newfoundland Act, 1933, in view of the result of the referendum, is in agreement with the entry of Newfoundland into Confederation. The union when effected, will seal in constitutional terms a close and fraternal association that has existed, in war and in peace, between the two countries over many years.

The Canadian Government is now consulting with the Governments of Newfoundland and the United Kingdom in the working out of appropriate

constitutional procedure for implementing the decision taken by the people of Newfoundland. The Government will also be glad to receive with the least possible delay authorized representatives of Newfoundland to negotiate the terms of union on the basis of my letter of October 29, 1947, to the Governor of Newfoundland, and the document transmitted with it. In these negotiations any special problems which may arise in connection with the entry of Newfoundland into Confederation will, I am sure, receive most careful consideration. Before final action is taken, the Government will recommend the resulting agreement to the Parliament of Canada for approval. In this connection, I would recall my statement made in the House of Commons on June 23rd, 1947, that, "on the part of Canada, no final decision would of course be taken without the approval of Parliament."

The union of Newfoundland and Canada, two North American democracies in the British Commonwealth of Nations, will add strength to both. Together, as partners, we may look forward to the future with more confidence than if we had remained separate political communities.

As Prime Minister of Canada, it is a pleasure for me on behalf of Canada to welcome, warmly and sincerely, the decision of the people of Newfoundland. As a member of the Government of Canada, it has been a privilege to have had to do with seeking to bring to completion a constructive partnership foreseen by those men of courage and vision in both countries who, many years ago, began the work of Confederation.