

Grants to Newfoundland

this house and is certainly re-echoed by this government. Mr. St. Laurent said, when speaking on article 29:

There is no undertaking to implement any terms of recommendation that may be made at that time by a royal commission. It was felt by the Newfoundland delegation, and by the representatives of the Canadian government, that this was something that was being entered into in a spirit of fairness on both sides, and that it was not necessary to make binding stipulations about what would happen with respect to the report of a royal commission.

Note, that he is saying there is no binding stipulation about what is to happen to the report of a royal commission or its recommendations. Those who framed this article decided it was better not to make any attempt at setting forth any stipulations as to what was to be done with the recommendations of the royal commission. Then he concluded with these words:

It was felt that if there was an investigation and a report by a commission, in which the public at that time would have confidence, the legislators of that day could well be trusted to do what would prove to be right in order to make this enlarged nation a united nation continuing on its path of progress toward its great destiny.

Mr. Speaker, we are the legislators to whom Mr. St. Laurent referred in the closing passage, and I believe that in this measure we are fully maintaining the view that was expressed by Mr. St. Laurent at that time as to the course that the legislators could well be trusted to take today, having regard to the desire that this enlarged nation be a united nation continuing on its path of progress toward its great destiny.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the minister in introducing this bill expressed the hope that its main effect would be to strengthen the friendly feeling between Newfoundland and the rest of Canada, and to strengthen the unity inside our country. If that is his hope the reports that have already been received from Newfoundland of the action announced yesterday to be taken by the government indicate that that hope may not be realized.

This is a small bill but it is an important bill and it embodies a constitutional principle which is perhaps quite as important as the one we were discussing a few moments ago. That constitutional principle is simply whether the solemn obligation of Canada in respect of a pact between two countries will be carried out. This bill is a rejection of the recommendations of a report of a royal commission set up under term 29 of the act of union with Newfoundland. It is a rejection of the recommendations of that report, yet there is a preamble in this bill which reads:

Whereas pursuant to the recommendations made by the royal commission established in fulfilment

[Mr. Fleming (Eglinton).]

of the obligation of the government of Canada under the said term 29, it is now desirable—

And so on. This bill is not in pursuance of all the recommendations of that royal commission, and because it rejects a very important part of those recommendations it is a rejection of that report. Indeed, this very short bill is a final and irrevocable settlement, to use the Prime Minister's (Mr. Diefenbaker's) words, of the contractual obligations, to use his words again, of term 29 of the act of union. This is a settlement imposed by one party to the act of union on the other party. It is a settlement brought about in this House of Commons by the government without consultation or agreement with the government of the other party, the government of Newfoundland.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): There was consultation.

Mr. Pearson: There was consultation before this announcement was made. When the government decided to take this course it had not at any time consulted with the government of Newfoundland in the terms of this resolution and the terms of this bill and tried to work out a course of action which would be acceptable to both parties to this act of union. Because the government did not do that, or make any attempt to do that, and because of the nature of this bill, I claim that this bill represents a repudiation of the act of union between two countries, and it weakens, and will weaken until it is rescinded, that union. It is unfair for that reason and it is a breach of faith with the people of Newfoundland. That is undoubtedly how it is being interpreted by the people of Newfoundland. It will cause disappointment. It has caused disappointment already and justified resentment in Newfoundland, and for that the government in introducing this bill is responsible.

This bill embodies exactly what the Prime Minister said on March 25 he would do. It embodies his interpretation of the nature of the recommendation of the royal commission, and I ask the hon. members on the other side of this house from Newfoundland whether they accept that interpretation, an interpretation repeated this afternoon, of the obligations imposed on a government under the recommendations of that royal commission. Certainly that was not the interpretation given to the recommendations of a royal commission by the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Browne), the Minister without Portfolio, some years ago in this house.

This bill ignores a word which is of no importance to the minister, but a very significant word in these recommendations. It ignores the word "thereafter", as having no