

## THE SENATE

Thursday, February 27, 1992

The Senate met at 2 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers.

### THE LATE HONOURABLE JOSEPH ROBERTS SMALLWOOD

#### TRIBUTES

**Hon. C. William Doody:** Honourable senators, I rise today to call the attention of this house to the passing of a great Canadian and great Newfoundlander and to pay tribute to a remarkable man.

Joseph Roberts Smallwood died in December past a few days short of his 91st birthday. Obviously, honourable senators, it would have been more appropriate had we been able to note his passing a few weeks back, but unfortunately that was quite impossible.

Joey Smallwood was born in the tiny community of Mint Brook, Bonavista Bay, not far from Gander. His family was far from well off by any standard. He did not finish high school but went on to have a remarkable and varied career as a newspaperman, a union organizer, a broadcaster, an author, a pig farmer, and a politician. I might say that he was far more successful as a politician than he was as a pig farmer.

He was a professed socialist who delighted in associating with the rich and famous; a dedicated union man who crushed the International Woodworkers Union and banned it from the province; he was the apostle of Confederation with Canada, a devoted Canadian who loved Newfoundland fiercely and shamelessly.

In 1945 the new Labour Government of the United Kingdom decided to allow Newfoundlanders to determine their own destiny. To that end, a national convention was arranged to meet in the old Colonial Building in St. John's and to be attended by delegates elected from all parts of the province. I understand Mr. Smallwood was on the Canadian mainland when he learned of this amazing development. He immediately declared Confederation with Canada to be his cause and he hurried back to the island to prepare himself for the coming battle.

He flung himself into this campaign with a vigour and enthusiasm that had never before been witnessed in Newfoundland. He outsmarted and out-talked all the forces arrayed against him and made mincemeat of those on the opposite side of the debate, those Newfoundland politicians and patriots who wished to return to the status quo, the old responsible government. Those of us who heard his speeches during that period will never forget them.

Yet, even with his mastery of the media—especially radio—even with the support of the governments of Ottawa and London, it took two votes to attain a bare 52 per cent majority to bring his dream to fruition. But it was undeniably his victory and undeniably he will be long honoured and respected for this achievement.

What Newfoundland would have been without Confederation is, of course, uncertain. Certainly, what it had been before Confederation and what it has become since Confederation have little similarity in many respects. The enthusiasm with which Smallwood engineered the Confederation campaign was equalled only by his zeal in dragging Newfoundland, as he said, screaming and kicking into the twentieth century.

A massive public works program was commenced that resulted in the provision of a standard of service never dreamed of in Newfoundland. Roads, schools, hospitals, vocational training schools—the Fisheries College (now the world-renowned Marine Institute) and, of course, Memorial University, arguably his greatest achievement after Confederation itself—these and more came into being.

Smallwood's attempts to industrialize and diversify Newfoundland had mixed results, and the debate will go on. Nevertheless, he will be remembered by most Newfoundlanders for that greatest of all achievements, the Confederation of Newfoundland with Canada.

Tragically, the last six years of Joey Smallwood's life were marred by a stroke that left this larger-than-life politician deprived of the ability to speak, to write or even to read. What an agonizing frustration it must have been for this compassionate, compelling orator, this insatiable, voracious reader, this author who prided himself on his writings more than anything, to be denied the opportunity to exercise these talents.

The memorial service for Joey, as he loved to be called, which was held in the great Roman Catholic Basilica overlooking St. John's harbour, was a fitting tribute to a great man. "It was a balanced blend," as one reporter wrote, "of the well-heeled mingling with those of modest means." Church leaders of six denominations and politicians of all parties turned out to honour Newfoundland's best known son, former premier Joey Smallwood. Prime Minister Mulroney said at the service, "Joey Smallwood loved a crowd and this one would have warmed his heart. I'm not sure he would have cared for the politics of everybody here, me included, but," said Mr. Mulroney, "he'd delight in seeing friend and foe join in genuine tribute to the great story of his life and it would have, as the Irish say, brought a smile to his lips and a tear to his eye."