

*The Address—Mr. Higgins*

then the best illustration I can give you is to tell an old political story which has been told in Newfoundland for many years. A member of the government was addressing his constituents, and said to them, "When this government came into power you were groaning under taxation. How are you now?" A voice came from the back of the hall, "We are too 'wake' to groan." I hope this will not be let go so long that we in Newfoundland will be too weak to groan about having a revision of this union of our province with Canada.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but he has spoken forty minutes. He may continue only with the unanimous consent of the house.

**Some hon. Members:** Go on.

**Mr. Higgins:** Thank you; I appreciate that. Then, turning to that part of the speech from the throne which deals with the amendment to the Supreme Court Act, let me say I hope it is not the intention that in abolishing appeals to the privy council former decisions of that body will not be followed. I have reason to believe that a prominent member of the judiciary in Canada made a statement this year indicating that it might be so. I hope it is not so, because that very important and historic case, the Labrador boundary case, in which a decision was given respecting the boundary between Quebec and the present province of Newfoundland, is most important to us. The issue of that case was the ownership of Labrador. As hon. members recall, the decision of the privy council gave the great part of Labrador to Newfoundland.

In view of the statement made this year by the premier of Quebec that he intends to reopen the decision in that particular case, it is most important that some provision be secured in the bill whereby the rights of the province of Newfoundland to Labrador will be secured. I shall not say anything further on that matter at this time.

In the speech from the throne notice is given of a proposed bill respecting assistance to the shipbuilding industry and merchant shipping. In this connection I would draw the attention of hon. members to the unfortunate situation of Newfoundland seamen who served in Newfoundland ships during the war. As you may be aware, Canadian merchant seamen serving in the war years were paid a bonus of 10 per cent of their wages at the end of their period of service. Our merchant seamen who went through the same risk—and you will recall the torpedoing of the *Caribou* between North Sydney and Port aux Basques, and the consequent great loss of life—are refused that payment on the

ground that they were not members of the manning pool. Well, that is perfectly in order; but—and I speak now as president of the Newfoundland seamen's association—if I have to go back to the members of the union of which I have the honour to be president and tell them that because they were not members of the manning pool the government will not pay them these moneys, it is going to be extremely difficult to explain it to them.

I notice, too, the proposed legislation with respect to the trans-Canada highway. I hope and trust that Newfoundland will be able to participate in that. I hope also that the contribution by the provinces will not be based upon a flat rate but rather on the work to be done and on the ability of a province to make a contribution. Otherwise, if we are all going to have to pay a flat rate, I am afraid the contribution from Newfoundland will be more than we can meet.

With these few remarks I shall close, thanking the house for its patience and courtesy in listening to me.

*(Translation):*

**Mr. Raoul Poulin (Beauce):** Mr. Speaker, since the debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne gives members of the house the opportunity of making themselves heard for the first time, I wish to avail myself of this privilege while craving the indulgence of which I am in such great need.

*(Text):*

Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words in the language of the majority of the hon. members of this house. I do not expect that my congratulations will add greatly to the unanimous tribute which greeted you when you were elected the Speaker of this house, but I merely point out that this universal approval shows beyond doubt that you are the right man in the right place.

I suppose you have noticed that my first words in this house were spoken in the language which my mother taught me. I should like hon. members to understand that if I do not speak fluent English it is not because of any lack of consideration for one of our official languages. As a humble country doctor I have devoted my time to my profession and to the social problems of my community and I was not in position to retain all that I had learned in my youth.

However, to prove my good will in this connection I should like to relate something personal. I have seven children and as they grow up I send one of them to an English-speaking part of the country so that he or she can learn the English language and use it later with greater ease and advantage. Two

[Mr. Higgins.]