

*Grants to Newfoundland*

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** As I recall it, there was no reference provided under the constitution.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** I do not think Mr. Jamieson mentioned the constitution. Everybody in Newfoundland and everybody who had anything to do with public affairs in Newfoundland knew perfectly well what the royal commission was that was provided for under the constitution. The Prime Minister was a member of this parliament; he took a large part in the debates at the time of union. He was the leader of the opposition. He was going to Newfoundland in that capacity for the first time to ask for the suffrage of the people; and on the most important question, the question that they attached more importance to in that province than any other, the Prime Minister did not know or had forgotten that under the constitution there was an obligation to appoint this royal commission. It seems to me that from the beginning to end of this matter that has been the attitude of this government; that there is no real obligation of any kind under term 29, no obligation at all; that what they have here is another of those fiscal arrangements on which they can make a dictate as they did, of course, at the beginning of the year 1958.

Now, we are asked in this bill, and the people of Newfoundland are asked, to be satisfied with this clause in the preamble:

Whereas in the course of such a review any special circumstances relating to the financial position of the province of Newfoundland after the 31st day of March, 1962, would be taken into consideration.

Now we are asked to do this by this government that failed to keep the promise to all the provinces that the Prime Minister had made in November, 1957 that he would reconvene the conference in January, 1958. Therefore, the government is saying to the people of Newfoundland: Now, sell your birthright, give up your birthright, give up your rights under the constitution and accept instead our word that when our seminar is over, when our study group has completed its work and when 1962 comes along we will do right by you.

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** How can any man in this chamber talk such nonsense?

**Mr. Pearson:** It is absolutely true, every word of it.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Everybody who has had any experience—and I have had a good deal—with federal-provincial fiscal arrangements knows that one of the basic principles of all the agreements right from the start has been that whatever is offered to one province is equally available to all others. That has always been the principle, and the only deviation there has been from that principle—

and I do not criticize it on that account—in the case of the Atlantic provinces grants. Now here the people of Newfoundland are being told we are going to extinguish by this bill the rights you have under the constitution, the rights you have under term 29. They go out the window. You have no rights.

No longer after 1962 can you point to the charter, point to the British North America Act and say, "We are assured, as long as it is needed, that we will have enough money to provide the services"—not the services that they have in Ontario or Saskatchewan—"at the level they were in Newfoundland in 1957". That is all it is. It is not very much oversold, sir. That is what it is, and that is what is being taken away from the people of Newfoundland; this right that was written into the constitution is being taken away from them if this legislation is enacted.

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** May I ask the hon. member a question? Will he point to any words in this bill that are going to take anything away from Newfoundland?

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Yes, certainly.

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** The words there provide for payments to Newfoundland.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** The words that take it away are these:

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

There is no fulfilment of the obligation here; there is a "ratting" on the obligation. That is what there is and the hon. gentleman has a very uneasy conscience about it. What has happened here is that the government is trying to take away the rights under the constitution and substitute in their place the words of a preamble which hon. gentlemen know have no legal effect. How in the name of heaven do these gentlemen expect when they do not respect the constitution, when they disregard the constitution, to have anyone pay the slightest attention to a few words printed in the preamble of a bill which is itself a repudiation of an obligation?

At six o'clock the house took recess.

**AFTER RECESS**

The house resumed at 8 p.m.

**Hon. W. J. Browne (Minister without Portfolio):** Mr. Speaker, the bill which we are now examining is more illuminating than the resolution which we had before us yesterday. Yesterday, when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fleming) was explaining the resolution he did not stress some of the