

It was stated that the main reason for this attitude is the question of principle — i.e. the democratic right to effect a constitutional change only through an elected Government.

They also argued quite strongly and with considerable prejudice about the financial aspect of the terms, Bishop O'Neil of Harbour Grace particularly.

They stressed that Confederation is not in any sense a religious issue, pointing out that in two strongly Roman Catholic Districts the Confederates received a majority. It was, they said, a national issue.

They said they believed that Confederation would win in an election and that a Confederate Government could then negotiate terms. At the same time they showed little disposition to regard Confederation favourably. For example they admitted that education would be safeguarded but queried the usefulness of this if there was not enough money to provide proper education. Again Bishop O'Neil suggested that Confederation could be reopened if they could not make arrangements for economic union with the United States.

On all the financial questions it was Bishop O'Neil who was the spokesman. Coadjutor Archbishop Flynn merely stated the main position and Bishop O'Neil stuck pretty closely to the question of principle. (He is said to be pro-Confederate although not openly.) Bishop O'Reilly (St. George's) said little throughout.

They said that they did not see why there should be any trouble if Confederation is not proceeded with because it has any number of chances in subsequent general elections. They made a good deal of the terms not being negotiated and seemed to think that an elected government could get better terms.

Bishop O'Reilly and Msgr. Flynn, when we were leaving, each requested me to place their views before the Canadian Government.

#### COMMENT

I heard various explanations for the attitude of the St. John's hierarchy — that the Archbishop is an old and tired man averse to change (opinion of a prominent Roman Catholic); that he is particularly concerned with the finances of the diocese, which he has built up satisfactorily, in event of province being compelled to resort to direct taxation — the church is said to be the largest landlord in St. John's; that the hierarchy are apprehensive of losing their autonomy to the Quebec hierarchy in the event of union; that in general they are afraid of the effects of North American materialism on the godly way of life of Newfoundlanders — this would seem to be borne out by editorials in the *Monitor*. It is said that the hierarchy are not really a unit on Confederation, Bishop O'Reilly and Bishop O'Neil being said to be privately in favour, but of course they must present a common front.

Perhaps an important point is that the Roman Catholic clergy are almost entirely Newfoundlanders of Irish extraction. The Irish vote "put over" Responsible Government originally, and they are proud of it. They have never taken kindly to Commission of Government. The Commission has not deferred to the hierarchy as most governments under Responsible Government did.

My opinion, after the discussion with the bishops, was that they appreciated a mistake had been made by open opposition to Confederation and that they would like a face-saving arrangement.