

Financial Assistance to Newfoundland

the mutual advantages to both Newfoundland and the other provinces of Canada in the accession to Canada of Newfoundland, I must say that at the present time I must differ from him as to the irrevocable nature of what is one interpretation of the Terms of Union with Canada of Newfoundland.

If we approve the resolution and the bill comes before us for discussion, there can be on that basis no commitment as to the passage of the bill because, to put it quite frankly, the interpretation of this term does not depend entirely upon the view that is put on it by the people from Newfoundland and the government of Newfoundland. In view of the fact that the government of Newfoundland is trying to, shall we say, acquire vested interests in a certain annual grant from the rest of Canada, I am sure everybody will agree that the rest of Canada has also a point of view to express.

I think there is an honest difference of opinion here. I remember the discussions in 1962. They were based, frankly, on the so-called interpretation, if you want, and whether or not it should be irrevocable. There are demands or, shall we say, legitimate needs—because I will not put it on the basis of demands—of the provinces from the government of Canada under a federal constitution, and this will always be so. It has been for years in the past. As long as this country exists under a federal constitution it will always be a condition that there shall be negotiation between the government of Canada and the provinces as to their legitimate fiscal requirements and fiscal provisions.

Surely no one is going to insist that they are absolutely right today. I remember the debates of the past, particularly in 1961 and 1962. At that time the Minister of Transport was a very ardent advocate of the Terms of Union as expressed by the government of the province of Newfoundland.

Mr. Monteith: According to their interpretation.

Mr. Lambert: According to their own interpretation, of course. I think it was quite as legitimate for representatives from other provinces in the parliament of Canada, who had just as legitimate an interest, to put forward their views. As a representative of the province of Alberta, I have just as much a legitimate interest in determining whether term 29 shall be irrevocable; because any provincial premier or provincial treasurer, if he could get a few extra million dollars

determined as being irrevocable, would be some sort of a fool, would he not, if he turned down the interpretation that this was irrevocable?

Certainly we would like to see the province of Newfoundland—which I have had the pleasure of visiting—get as much money as they can. But are the remaining provinces and the government of Canada to determine that this shall be, on the basis of the Terms of Union, irrevocable? Shall not there be an interpretation of this question in a hypothetical sense? Is there not just as much justice in determining that Newfoundland in joining the other provinces of Canada is equal, in a fiscal sense, with the rest of the provinces? This is the view of my province. As a member of parliament from another part of Canada I believe that in so far as fiscal relationships are concerned we are all equals, regardless of other considerations. The Minister of Transport may have some comments to make in this regard, but in so far as we in the rest of Canada are concerned, in the matter of fiscal relations we are equals. This is the fundamental question. Should this grant not be considered as part of our fiscal relations one with another, regardless of the economic advantages of our provinces?

● (9:30 p.m.)

My own province is attributed to be one of the wealthy provinces. That is fine; we are prepared to pay our share of the load, and I am sure the province of Ontario is also, as well as the province of Manitoba. But why should there be enshrined in perpetuity an additional advantage? This is a question which is posed by a lot of people.

The people of Newfoundland may have another view, and I do not deny them the right to have this other view. The minister may be smug and say: Well, all right; this guarantees us political support. But I am not too sure about that. In the long run we are dealing here with a union of Canada. We are all in on this on a partnership basis and we would naturally like to see the terms of the bill, which I assume will be fairly short and fairly clear. However, I put these considerations before hon. members here who are from all parts of Canada, not from one part or any other part of Canada.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): There is nobody here from Newfoundland.

Mr. Lambert: As I said, I have very grave reservations about incorporating this into an