

Grants to Newfoundland

the position that was taken by the Conservative party. It was also taken by the hon. gentleman in 1957.

What do we have now? We have a repudiation of the existing terms; not better terms and not an improvement in the terms but a repudiation of the existing terms.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Nonsense.

Mr. Pickersgill: The Minister of Finance whose favourite word is "nonsense"—

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Just as your favourite stock in trade is nonsense.

Mr. Pickersgill: —talked about the over-selling of term 29. I take it that although the minister was not prepared to say so, he was referring primarily to the premier of Newfoundland in talking about this overselling, and if he was not he can correct me. In any case, to show how very precise the premier of Newfoundland was in his interpretation of term 29, let me say this. I have heard him interpret it on many occasions on public platforms. I have never heard him deviate from the terms at all. He has always explained very precisely what they were as he did at the dominion-provincial conference in November of 1957 as will be found at page 99 of the report of the proceedings where he said:

Under the terms of reference,—

That is, of the royal commission. I continue:

—under the terms of section 29, the royal commission will not be allowed to recommend that the parliament of Canada on your recommendation—

He was speaking to the Prime Minister at the time. I continue:

—vote us more than enough to continue at the levels which we now have. In other words, the most we can hope for from the royal commission is enough to keep us 25 years behind Nova Scotia as she is today.

That was the interpretation and that was always the interpretation that was put upon it, as the plain terms show, that after eight years the purpose of this grant—if any was needed—was to continue the level of services then reached, not to improve the services and not to equalize at all. As Mr. St. Laurent said, it was to try to bring them up during the transitional period and after that to continue them.

The Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Fulton) do not seem to be able to understand that that is why the people of Newfoundland resent so bitterly all these reminders of the other things they are getting, in common with other Canadians, because they consider

that they are entitled to their rights and that they are also entitled to be treated like other Canadians.

Term 29 to a Newfoundlander is almost the equivalent to a French-speaking citizen of Canada of the language term of the British North America Act. It is a sheet anchor. It is the right of Newfoundlanders to be assured that whatever comes they will have enough, without having to have punitive taxation higher than the rest of the provinces.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. gentleman permit a question arising out of the comparison he makes. Does he remember that Mr. St. Laurent said that the language rights of French Canada could be changed without consultation by a majority of parliament?

Mr. Pickersgill: Yes, I remember that very well but I also remember what else he said. He went on to state that no man of honour would ever do it. And that is precisely why, under the terms of union with Newfoundland, no one ever believed that this would happen.

Mr. Pearson: No person of honour would have made that change.

Mr. Pickersgill: It must be remembered that we had had no previous experience. No one would have believed that any Canadian government would have come into this house and proposed legislation to repudiate the terms of the British North America Act. That is what we have before the house today.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Rot.

Mr. Pickersgill: That is why every Newfoundlander, except one or two, resents bitterly the action being taken by this government. It does not matter how many millions any minister says have been spent on family allowances or unemployment insurance in Newfoundland or how many millions have been spent on Atlantic provinces grants or on anything else which goes equally to other people. I admit that the Atlantic provinces grants do not go equally to other people but they go to four provinces and are given for one purpose—at least that is what we are told—and that purpose is to enable these four provinces to improve their situation, not to continue what they have but to improve their situation.

The Minister of Finance stood here on September 4 last year and said that because these Atlantic provinces grants were given to Newfoundland they could wait for another year for the disposition of this matter. That