

The Address—Mr. W. J. Browne

Our island, Mr. Speaker, has its places of beauty that stir our hearts and make us love her. We have our historic landmarks where in days gone by the two great pioneer races, the French and the English, fought for the mastery of this continent. In my district there is St. John's, and despite what the hon. member for Cape Breton South (Mr. Gillis) may say, St. John's is the place where Cabot discovered the new world in 1497, where in 1583 Sir Humphrey Gilbert laid the cornerstone of the British empire. In my district there is also the little settlement of Ferryland. Those who followed the election contest in St. John's West may have heard of it. Ferryland is a very historic settlement because it was there that Lord Baltimore first made his attempt at colonizing the new world. It was there that Sir David Kirke, the conqueror of Quebec and the captor of Champ-lain and the saintly Breboeuf, set up a grog shop when he had fallen upon evil days.

In the same district we have the beautiful settlement of Placentia, which was once the French capital and came under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Quebec and the saintly Bishop Laval. The people of that place are still proud to call it the ancient capital. Nearly one hundred years ago the sisters of the Order of Presentation came from Ireland and set up their schools there. Personages prominent in the social, political and ecclesiastical life of our country were born there. The present Archbishop of St. John's, who has presided over his See for thirty-four years now, was born there, and his coadjutor archbishop, whose early death a few days ago was lamented by so many, was also born there.

St. John's West has other features of interest besides its beauty and its historic monuments. I believe many members of the house have visited St. John's and know what an important naval base it was during the war. They know the strategic value of Newfoundland. It has always been of great strategic value, and it was the possession of Newfoundland that gave Great Britain a real chance to conquer the western world. A few miles from Placentia there is the great naval base of Argentia where President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill met during the war and signed the Atlantic charter.

I am proud to be the representative not only of the industrious fisherfolk of the districts of Ferryland, Placentia and St. Mary's, but also of the people of St. John's.

If I may revert to the proceedings of last Thursday afternoon, some hon. members from Newfoundland must have felt a certain nostalgia when they witnessed the scenes of a few days ago, because if it had not been for confederation perhaps we might have been wit-

nessing them as the hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay (Mr. Ashbourne), the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate (Mr. Bradley), and I witnessed them together twenty-five years ago when we sat in the same house.

I know that hon. members heard a great deal about Newfoundland in this house in the early part of this year and also last year, but I trust that they will forgive me. I do not intend to tell a prolonged story, but very briefly I wish to review the important facts and incidents that led up to our presence here today. The people of Canada, especially those who live in the western provinces, know the effects of the 1929 stock market crash. We did not feel them until 1931 when the government of the day was suddenly surprised to find that they could not borrow any more money. Then there was a wonderful to-do. Everybody tried to economize, to cut down salaries, and all kinds of expedients were adopted to save the country's economy. In 1932 the storm broke with a vengeance. There were riots; people stormed the House of Assembly where the members were in session. The government was forced to hold an election.

In the avalanche that overtook the government a new government was elected of which I had the honour to be a member, and although we strove manfully to restore the shaken fabric of our country, it was impossible. A royal commission, on which there were two Canadian representatives and one Englishman, decided, after having considered every kind of solution, even confederation—the government of Canada was not prepared to accept Newfoundland into confederation—that a form of government which had been tried once before in Cromwell's time, namely a commission of government, should be introduced into Newfoundland with three Newfoundlanders and three Englishmen, and presided over by His Excellency the Governor.

We had great hopes that when politics were set aside our people would be united in a great effort, and we would quickly restore our country's prosperity. Unfortunately that did not happen, and although on the whole we got fairly good government, it was not until 1941, with the arrival of the United States troops, that things began to change. The construction of those great bases at Fort Pepperell in St. John's and at Argentia in Placentia bay put hundreds of millions of United States dollars into Newfoundland and quickly restored prosperity so that from that time, as hon. members know, Newfoundland was prosperous, had millions of dollars to her credit, and was able to lend Great Britain the sum of \$14 million.

It was a condition of the appointment of the commission of government that respons-