

nothing would sooner end useful discussion than a huge gathering of the kind dealing with a report, particularly one of the magnitude of that presented by the Rowell-Sirois commission. No; the place to begin the consideration of that report is at a conference between the representatives of the properly constituted authorities of this country; that is, the provincial and dominion governments. If we can succeed in reaching a measure of agreement between the dominion and provincial governments in the first instance, I have not much doubt about the success that ultimately will result in regard to the changes that will have to be made later on in our constitution. But, if we cannot get that agreement at the outset, then I submit it would be folly to enlarge the number and classes of representatives to be called together to consider the report.

My hon. friend asks, "Why wait so long?" Well, if we had proceeded any sooner the criticism would have been, "Why did you go ahead so fast? You have not given us time to read the report. You have not given the provinces time to read it. Why have you brought on this conference so quickly?" I have only to mention the dates on which certain events took place to let the house see that we have brought on the conference just as quickly as it reasonably could have been expected to be brought on. In the first place the report itself was not tabled in this House of Commons until the month of May. We were then engaged in a war session. I doubt if there was a member of the ministry, or half a dozen members of the house, who had the opportunity, during that session of the house, to read the report carefully. It was August 7 before parliament adjourned. Three months have since gone by, but for a considerable time after parliament adjourned the ministry was busier than ever seeking to get along with the war effort in particulars to which it was not possible for ministers to give their attention while the house was in session. More than that, the provincial governments at that time would not have had an opportunity to peruse the report. Any reasonable person will see that in choosing the date we have chosen, in waiting until parliament met to see if we could reasonably count upon an adjournment in January, and in asking members of the provincial governments to attend at that time, we have taken the earliest possible opportunity of calling a conference to deal with so important a matter. And I am very happy to say that, by proceeding in this manner, we have been able to get the assent of the governments of all the provinces to be

represented at a conference in the month of January: That of itself, I think, is a real achievement. While undoubtedly there will be different points of view presented, and while the provinces may differ with each other in some matters of detail of greater or less importance, I have no doubt that, after discussion, and particularly in the light of the situation with which this country and the world is faced at this time, those who attend the conference will come with a sense of responsibility, and that they will seek to do all they possibly can to keep unanimous the feeling that exists at the present time in regard to all matters pertaining to the well-being of our country. It is too early to speak of what may come out of the conference, but, at any rate, I think we are taking the right step at the right time and in the right way.

My hon. friend suggested that we should have special committees of the house to discuss matters having to do with the war effort. He says it is impossible to get the information desired in a formal debate in this house. Hon. members will, I believe, be surprised at the information they will receive in the course of this debate. The government will make every effort to see that the fullest possible information is given the house; and while I agree with my hon. friend that all details cannot be brought out during formal discussion, there is no reason why this house should not resolve itself later into committee of the whole and consider matters in detail as a body. However, my hon. friend has suggested that he and some of his colleagues should meet with myself and members of the ministry to discuss what may be best. I thank him for that suggestion and wish to say that I will take pleasure in seeing that a conference between us is arranged for at an early date. That, I think, is the right way to proceed in any effort to discover what course it may be best to pursue.

I come now to the last part of my hon. friend's speech, at the close of which he moved an amendment in which something was said to the effect that the government had been soothing the Canadian people with regard to the security of the nation. Just where my hon. friend got that idea I cannot understand. If there is one single thing above another that this administration has sought to do, it has been to have the people of Canada realize not only the magnitude of our war effort but also the tremendous seriousness of the whole situation as it exists in the world to-day. Far from trying to soothe the people in any way or to lull them, which was another expression used by my hon. friend, in regard to the nation's security, we have