

The Budget—Mr. Fulton

Canadian patriot who, as I recall it, started—in his own words, not mine—to remove from Canada the last vestiges of colonialism. Those were his words. He introduced certain measures which he said were forward-moving steps in that process; and the last great task which he set himself was the repatriation of the Canadian constitution. So far that task falls far short of realization. If there is one person who, together with the Prime Minister, shares the major portion of the responsibility for the lack of fulfilment of that task, it is the same Minister of Justice.

I wonder whether the government does not dare to meet the provinces because they know that the provinces have needs and requirements which they are not able to meet under the present arrangements which they have made and beyond which the federal government is not prepared to go.

I recall that the premier of my own province of British Columbia has been down in recent months and has indicated clearly to the federal government that they require certain assistance over and above that which they are now receiving. The premier of British Columbia has laid before the federal government certain concrete proposals which so far have gone unanswered. I remember that the other day the Minister of Transport (Mr. Chevrier) used the extraordinary argument that he had not realized that the request of the province of British Columbia for assistance in completing the Pacific Great Eastern Railway was even a request at all.

While I do not share the political convictions of the premier of the province of British Columbia, I do share with him an awareness that the needs of that province with respect to the development of its own resources demand financial means which at the present time are beyond the capabilities of the province to meet because of the disadvantageous agreement which they have made with the federal government. The premier of that province came down here to lay before the federal government well-considered and reasonable requests for assistance in connection with the railway problem and in connection with the matter of development and a long range yield program for the handling of the province's resources, requests which so far have gone entirely unanswered.

I wonder why it is that the dominion government is so unprepared, so reluctant to meet the provinces, particularly in the light of the glowing statements that were made just some three or four years ago. I recall that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) sought in his budget address to lay the problem on a certain specific or particular

basis. My answer to the Minister of Finance would be that before he is entitled to reproach any party in the house or any province in the dominion it is up to him and his government to indicate to the house and to the country the basis on which he would be prepared to deal with suggestions for an over-all solution of this whole problem. There could be nothing clearer, Mr. Speaker, than the fact that the responsibility for the initiative in this issue rests squarely upon the dominion government mainly through the instrumentality of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson).

But of course, as my leader pointed out this afternoon, the ultimate responsibility comes back to the Prime Minister of Canada. In substantiation of what I have said I want to refer in some detail to the record of the last dominion-provincial conference which held its first meeting on Tuesday, January 10, 1950. I hold in my hand the record of the proceedings entitled "Proceedings of the Constitutional Conference of Federal and Provincial Governments" for the first session on Tuesday, January 10, 1950 and the third session on Thursday, January 12, 1950. These meetings were held at Ottawa and in essence they were primarily devoted to a discussion of problems regarding amendment of the British North America Act. The conferences got off to an exceptionally good start. They were adjourned until September, 1950 when, at the invitation of the premier of Quebec, they met in Quebec city from September 25 to September 28. They met under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister of Canada, the right hon. gentleman who so far has shown an extraordinary reluctance to exercise any responsibility or any semblance of statesmanship notwithstanding the impasse into which dominion-provincial relations have fallen at the present time.

Mr. Abbott: That is what it is to be a Rhodes scholar.

Mr. Fulton: If any hon. member wishes to take exception to my words—

Mr. Lesage: That is what you would like.

Mr. Fulton: Yes, indeed I would, and I am going to give the hon. gentleman plenty of opportunity to do so because I am going to read from the record of this conference and the record of returns which were tabled in this house.

Mr. Lesage: You are beating around the bush.

Mr. Fulton: If my hon. friend wishes to interrupt, would he show the courtesy of rising to his feet to do so.