

*Dominion-Provincial Conference*

suggestions even before the invitation. He has been reported in news comments and communiques to the effect that he would not accept the establishment of a house committee to study the constitution. How can the opposition discharge its duties, and how can opposition members make concrete suggestions to the government, when the Prime Minister tells the country through the medium of the press that he is not ready to accept opposition suggestions? This is just another way by which the Prime Minister imposes his view on this parliament and the country as a whole.

We have read the manifesto distributed by the Liberal party, during the last election about the just society. I believe the Prime Minister should have read this manifesto before stating this morning that he will not consider the acceptability of a house committee on the constitution. I suggest the Prime Minister should read paragraph E of this manifesto which was distributed throughout the country. It has the picture of the Prime Minister on the front with the words "For Canada; the just society" Let me read what paragraph E states in part:

Parliament's procedures must be reformed. Greater importance must be given to parliamentary committees so that members of parliament may play a more effective role in our legislative process.

That is a quotation from the main manifesto, the vademecum or biblical literature that the Liberal organization sent out through the country during the last election. The election is now over. It is difficult to understand the members of the Liberal cabinet and Liberal members across the way because I do not believe the government has any intention of living up to the promises made to the people of this country during the election campaign.

[*Translation*]

And now, Mr. Speaker, I feel it is imperative to say a few words about the climate that prevailed at the constitutional conference and also in the House of Commons this morning.

At the Conference held this week, the Prime Minister was in the driver's seat; the provinces had to follow his lead in the debate; and he would not accept from them any position, any decision nor any recommendation that was contrary to his own views.

In fact, to my way of thinking, this was not a constitutional conference in which the elected representatives of the people were taking part, but rather a meeting between the premiers of the different provinces of Canada.

[Mr. Valade.]

And we all know that the premiers are after all no more than the representatives of political parties. By no means do I wish to question the qualifications, the integrity or the objectivity of any of them, but I merely want to mention that there were at that conference table elected party representatives, so that the opposition of each of the participating provinces was excluded.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that so important a conference does not concern only the parties in power in the provinces, but that it must certainly concern also the opposition parties, whichever they are. The same applies both to the federal government and the provincial governments.

After the statement of the Prime Minister, we heard—and I felt most proud of it—the comments full of dignity made by the leader of the Progressive Conservative party, who surely taught the Prime Minister a bit of wisdom by tackling this matter with restraint, with objectivity and with all the earnestness required by a question as essential as the constitutional conference.

What astonished me and every other hon. member—and I think this applies to all opposition parties—was the request made by the Prime Minister, not to the government members who are responsible for the administration, but to opposition members, to express, publicly or otherwise, their views on the Senate, on monarchy and on the government's proposed constitution. He asked whether opposition members agreed with the provincial premiers. What is the attitude of the opposition on linguistic rights? What are their suggestions? What is the position the Progressive Conservative opposition on the two-nation policy?

The Prime Minister was then asking the opposition to outline his administrative program.

I am greatly surprised at this attitude on the part of the Prime Minister, because ever since he has been sitting in this house as Prime Minister as well as Minister of Justice, he has never asked opposition parties for suggestions regarding the organization or the preparation of the agenda of the constitutional conference.

It is only after the conference has practically fizzled out that the Prime Minister, in an attempt to conceal the few positive effects obtained, appeals to the opposition.

But among the questions asked by the Prime Minister, some cast doubts upon the sincerity and the concern of the Progressive