

one province—any one province—make such a request of the people of the whole of Canada they have a right to expect that the people of the whole of Canada, through their parliament, will make conditions with respect to the assumption of that liability. I do not think there is any escape from that position, and there is no need to read into it a sinister meaning, as my hon. friend from Lethbridge did, implying that all of us sitting in this parliament were puppets of some indefinite outside influence which he describes as the money power. Well, I doubt whether he would find half a dozen, no, he would not find one, of the 245 members here who would agree for a moment that this parliament was or could be subject to any sinister influence such as he imagines, trying to support his contention by reading anonymous communications.

That sort of thing, Mr. Speaker, does not get us anywhere in wrestling with these problems. The government of Canada is keenly desirous of cooperating with the provinces in effecting some regularized way out of the morass into which some of them have drifted. I do not join with those who blame the people of those provinces for the condition in which they find themselves. I know too well the economic and climatic conditions which have prevailed in some of those provinces, and which were largely responsible for their present plight. Of course, having taken some pride during ten years as treasurer of a province in holding its debt down to \$50,000,000, which was as far as I thought it ought to go, I think I may be forgiven the horror which I experienced when I found that four years of another kind of government had trebled the debt. But the people of Saskatchewan maintained that government in power for four years, and as the right hon. leader of the opposition has well said, the people of a province have a right to whatever government they themselves vote for. That was a pretty expensive lesson, but I am quite sure the people of Saskatchewan have learned it. In the main, however, those western provinces, with which of course this resolution will chiefly deal, at least during the early years of the operation of any legislation which may be introduced under it, have had difficulties in an economic sense far greater than those affecting the older and wealthier provinces in central Canada and the maritimes.

I do not think I need go further with respect to the broad principle now under discussion. It is not intended to rob any province of its right of self-government, of its autonomy, but neither is it contemplated to do what my hon. friend from Lethbridge would have us do, that is, abdicate the authority of this parliament with respect to the control of the credit of the whole of the country. If the credit of

[Mr. Dunning.]

the whole of Canada is extended to any province or provinces this parliament at all times must retain control of the extent to which and the terms upon which that credit is extended.

Mr. R. A. PELLETIER (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to this motion with a great deal of uneasiness. I am not a constitutional authority, nor am I even a member of the legal profession. But I recall the words of the hon. member for Kootenay East (Mr. Stevens), in his first speech this session, when he said that this was the House of Commons and, therefore, the house of the common people. It seems to me that any resolution brought before us necessarily must affect the common people, and I like to identify myself with the defence of the common people, using that term in its proper sense.

After listening to the speeches on this resolution it seems to me that its importance cannot be minimized. For example, I have before me the words of the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George (Mr. Cahan), when he gave us a picture of the depth of feeling that existed at the time the British North America Act was drawn up. He said:

The germs of the confederation idea came from the sixty thousand men of the French race and of the Catholic religion who were left practically deserted when the naval and military and civil authorities of France evacuated Quebec and Montreal, and left those people under the guidance of their clergy to work out their own destiny on the banks of the St. Lawrence river. The germs of the confederation idea were in the minds of the tens of thousands of men who left the New England states, and especially the state of New York, and came down and settled in western Nova Scotia, which then comprised the shores of New Brunswick to the Maine border, and there attempted to work out their own destiny as British subjects, enjoying, as they hope to do, the liberties and privileges which appertain to British citizenship.

He then went further and said:

These men brought with them the ideas which germinated and found expression in the British North America Act, that act representing an expression of the profoundest emotions of these people and of others who had been born and bred in this country, all of whom agreed, irrespective of their political affiliations, to unite to carry the confederation program to success. And entertaining those ideas—because I have lived for a certain time of my life among men who would rather fight and die than see any changes made in the British North America Act which they regarded as contrary to their best traditions and their best aspirations—I look upon that act, I look upon the constitution of Canada as something that should not be amended frivolously or without impartial and anxious investigation and study.