

I wish by some regulation of Mr. Speaker the learned treatise I have before me of the British North America Act of 1935, could be handed to each hon. member; I refer to the report of the committee which considered the British North America Act. Every hon. member should have a copy of this before the resolution is passed. The municipalities are becoming alarmed. In my opinion, instead of passing the resolution, we should have the vote of the people of Canada to abolish, if possible, provincial legislatures altogether. That would be a godsend to the Canadian people, and if it were brought about we would have some harmony throughout the country. Their creation has led to racial and religious jealousies in Canada, and overgovernment and overtaxation.

Confederation was brought about by compromise, because the history of the world has been one of minorities. The history of Canada has always been the history of compromises. Confederation was a compromise. When confederation was passed the rights of minorities in Ontario were settled for all time in 1863-67, and the people in the province of Ontario thought the door was closed forever and that certain school questions were settled which we now find are not settled, and which could not be extended.

The fathers of confederation handed over the regulatory power of disallowance to federal power, though, to protect Ontario.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member has spoken forty minutes.

Mr. R. E. FINN (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that perhaps the most important document in our dominion is the British North America Act. Its provisions respecting federal and provincial rights are sacred, as are the powers of the parliament of Canada and our legislatures as set out in sections 91 and 92. When this afternoon I listened to the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George (Mr. Cahan) a fellow Nova Scotian, a gentleman of years and of fine texture of mind, well able to interpret statutes, I was impressed by the statements he placed before the house. I was pleased, further, to listen to the observations of other hon. members, including the leader of the social credit party (Mr. Blackmore) from the province of Alberta.

It seems to me that to some extent we are losing sight of an act which to a certain extent supersedes the British North America Act. I refer to the act of 1931, passed by the imperial parliament, entitled the Statute of Westminster. If I recall rightly, the present Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Mackenzie

King) was the one who first at a conference in London outlined the position of Canada and stood for its status as a component part of the British empire, daughter within her mother's house but mistress in her own, and it fell to the lot of the right hon. the leader of the opposition to-day (Mr. Bennett) who, as Prime Minister of this country attended the conference in 1931 to approve the draft statute of Westminster which became law. Therefore all the clauses contained within that statute bear his imprimatur, so to speak, more than that of my right hon. friend the Prime Minister because the proposed statute was only in posse in his time and was in esse when the present leader of the opposition was Prime Minister. The statute of Westminster gives an entirely new status to Canada and to the other component parts of the empire which are looked upon as independent, self-governing and absolutely free, save in the one respect, and one only, as regards Canada that the British North America Act can be amended only by the parliament of Great Britain upon request of the parliament of Canada through the government of Canada, and the provisions of section 92 of the British North America Act only with the consent of all the provinces of Canada.

This afternoon I heard the leader of the social credit party, the hon. member for Lethbridge (Mr. Blackmore) make the statement in this house, honestly, I believe, but without knowledge, that we were subservient; that there was in existence to-day a sort of combination between the Bank of England and the independent parliaments of what are called the dominions, which are defined under the interpretation clause of the British statute of 1931, and that these parliaments through some sort of understanding were attempting to keep behind the screen, to keep away from the people whom they represent things that they would not like to come out in the open to do.

I desire to compliment the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Church) upon his reference to the late Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and I say to hon. gentlemen opposite of the great Conservative party of the past and of the present as it is—and I hope, Mr. Speaker, that its day will be greater still some time when the people of Canada so decide—when I heard the hon. member for Broadview complimenting Sir Wilfrid Laurier upon the stand he took with reference to the carving out of the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan and the preservation of the rights of minorities, I felt that that compliment should re-echo from one end of Canada to the other because it is in such contrast with the attitude of the right hon. the leader of the opposition of that day,