

compared with 117,787 in 1926, and in Alberta, while there were 82,954 in 1921 the number in 1926 was 77,130. The total acreage under crops of all varieties has increased in these provinces, in Manitoba by something like 400,000 acres, and in the other provinces correspondingly. I need not go into details. The point I make is this: the considerable accretion of new wealth which we have had in the country has been attributable to the development of our natural resources and to the crops that have been reaped by our husbandmen, as well as to the minerals and metals taken out of the soil and to the forests that have been denuded of their trees. These are facts that cannot be controverted in the light of the returns made by the various departments affected. So that the courage, skill, enterprise and hard work of Canadians have made possible the various increases to which I have alluded as having occurred during the years that have passed. But concurrently there has been a steady diminution in the population that has effected these results, and to that I shall presently refer. So much for this phase of the subject.

Let me come now to another point mentioned in the speech from the throne—and perhaps it is well to mention it here, inasmuch as this is the most appropriate stage at which to discuss it: I have reference to the statement with regard to the Dominion-provincial conference. We are told that a great conference took place in this capital, as indeed there did, and that a large number of very important subjects were considered. May I venture to suggest to the first minister that it is highly desirable that this parliament should have laid before it a precis of what took place at that conference? I am not for a moment suggesting that the explanation given the other day is not wholly adequate from the standpoint of those who participated in the conference; naturally they would not desire to have their discussions made public. I can quite understand that; had I represented one of the provinces I should certainly have felt that way myself. But when we are asked, as we are, to deal with the matters discussed at the conference, it seems to me the proper course would have been to prepare a precis which might have been signed by the respective representatives from day to day or at the conclusion of the conference, in order that parliament might have something on which to proceed intelligently and which it could fully understand. Such a precis would enable us to understand what took place at the conference. I observe from the speech from the throne that certain measures will be introduced as a result of this con-

[Mr. Bennett.]

ference. These are purely domestic matters, and I note that at an early day we may expect the introduction of these measures, and when they are before us we shall consider the problems involved. But what about the provinces? The province which is oldest, possibly, in point of settlement, and certainly the second largest, has already given its view of the matter. While we in this parliament have before us what this government has to say with respect to the conference, may I also direct attention to what the government of the province of Quebec had to say on the subject on January 10 last. The following words occur in the speech from the throne as delivered in the legislature of Quebec:

An interprovincial conference was held in Ottawa in November last. All the provinces of the Dominion were represented there, and questions of the greatest importance were discussed. My ministers believe that Canadian unity and the future of Canada will be best assured by respecting provincial autonomy and by all remaining loyal to the British North America Act in spirit as well as in the letter. This declaration is the more timely in view of the celebration in 1927 of the sixtieth anniversary of the Canadian confederation. The progress hitherto achieved, marked by such splendid festivities, should move us to forestall any possible source of discord.

So that the conference was a possible source of discord—this conference about which we have been told so much. In the view of His Majesty's advisers of the province of Quebec it was not a conference making for Canadian unity but one, rather, which constituted a source of discord. I should like, and I am sure the country would be glad too, to hear the Prime Minister explain just how the conference may have been a possible source of discord, something that may possibly disturb Canadian unity, according to the view of the legislature of Quebec. I should think, in view of that statement in the speech from the throne presented to the legislature of that province, and, further, in view of the speech which we have heard in this parliament, that it is highly necessary—indeed, I consider it absolutely essential—that we should have before us some precis with respect to what took place at the conference in order that we may be able to reach our own conclusions in the matter.

I gather that my right hon. friend had something of this kind in mind when he made a speech in the great city of Quebec while attending a banquet given in honour of one of his colleagues. On that occasion he used, or is reported to have used, these words:

Since the government of Canada is but the executive of parliament, announcement of what had been agreed upon would have to wait until parliament assembled.