

never forget the query of one of the representatives of the old Tories,—the good old Tories, because there are some of those good old Tories in England—

Mr. DUPRE: Thank you—not in Canada, though?

Mr. BOURASSA: Well, in Canada?—no. We will reserve that point for another occasion. There was a mixture of acuteness and naiveté when he put this question: "What are your representatives going to do at this conference?" I said, "I do not know; I am not in the secrets of the government in power, or of any other government. If, however, the representatives of Canada act according to the mandate they have received from the people of Canada at the last election"—and that was a few weeks after we settled the constitutional question in 1926—"they will make a further step in advance." I hope my right hon. friend the leader of the opposition will forgive my next statement. The person to whom I was talking said, "I am afraid of one thing"—mind you, he was an old Tory—"I am afraid of one thing, that Mr. King will be too kind-hearted."—"What do you mean?"—"Why," he said, "he has the chance of his lifetime; with Hertzog and Fitzgerald, the three of them can carry the day."—"But, what do you mean?"—"Well, to tell you frankly, we are tired of all those discussions about dominion autonomy, and it is about time that you people in Canada, Australia and elsewhere proved to us that you are worthy of the concessions we are prepared to give to you. However, if you are afraid of some little provincial consequences in your own provinces, you cannot expect us to have more respect for you than you have for yourselves."

Of course some safeguards must be preserved. From the very composition of the country the need of safeguards arises. No one in this house has put it more clearly and more convincingly than did the Minister of Justice in his speech to which I referred a moment ago. Canada is not one country; she is a confederacy. I am not going to review the old theory of contract, agreement, solemn pact; those questions were settled long ago. In that respect I think the interpretation once given by Lord Haldane settled the question. The constitution of Canada is the result of a contract or of a treaty made between the provinces or the old colonies which established Canada. However, the very basis of the treaty was the abandonment by those colonies of their previous status and their acceptance of the new provincial status made for them by the act of confederation. The new prov-

inces are in the confederation in exactly the same position, endowed with the same rights and obliged to the same duties as the colonies which established confederation. From a constitutional or national viewpoint there is no difference between the status of Alberta and that of Quebec, between the status of Saskatchewan and that of Nova Scotia. The old provinces agreed to form a confederacy; then they requested and received from the Imperial parliament an august mandate to form new units by carving out of the uninhabited regions of the northwest new provinces to come into the family. They were brought into the confederation not as sons and daughters but as partners, with an equality of legal and constitutional rights. In that respect, our constitution compares with that of Switzerland where all the cantons are sovereign units within a certain sphere. And the Dominion is a sovereign unit in another sphere. So far as I understand the object of the clause that is to be introduced into the statute of Westminster regarding Canada, it means that we choose to adjourn the consideration of such means by which we in Canada will be able to deal with our constitution as all the other dominions are able to do, that we freely choose to remain in a state of tutelage so far as that is concerned, and that this statute will not change the relative positions of the provinces and the Dominion.

I think, though, there is a point in what was indicated this afternoon by the hon. member for Shelburne-Yarmouth (Mr. Ralston). I simply mention it en passant because, of course, so far as that goes I plead my ignorance as a layman; but reading the first paragraph of the clause concerning Canada, and then reading it with the context, there is no doubt that if in the future this parliament, upon a joint address of both chambers to the Imperial parliament, secured some amendment which might indirectly, or even directly affect, not exactly the legal status—I suppose that could hardly be done—but that might affect, for example, the representation of the provinces in this parliament, I think the reservation made under this new statute will not cover such amendments. I think this covers only the amendments that can be made to the acts as they stand now. But supposing a new amendment was made which would effect a material change in the status of the provinces, I am afraid they would hardly be protected by the other clause which gives them the power to repeal imperial statutes repugnant to their own laws.