

The Address—Mr. Drew

that has been suggested is definitely in the field of provincial authority. Those are the things that are going to cause difficulty. All this difficulty could be avoided by bringing these governments together in a conventional relationship such as has been suggested.

I emphasize this point again. This conference came to an end in May of 1946 by the decision of the dominion government, and it has not met since, for one reason and one reason alone, namely, the refusal of the dominion government to convene it. The record is clear. I for one have on frequent occasions urged the reconvening of that conference. I have written not only to the previous Prime Minister but to the present Prime Minister, while he was acting in that capacity, urging the reconvening of the conference; and I am not the only provincial premier who did so during the intervening years. But may I emphasize that there are those, whose views cannot under any circumstances be said to have a political flavour opposed to this government, who take that stand. For that reason may I just quote the words of Hon. Angus Macdonald spoken in the Nova Scotia legislature on May 12, 1947. I shall quote fairly briefly, but the passage shows exactly what the position was, in the words of that able public servant. These are his words:

There are important matters yet to be settled, constitutional and economic. In the constitutional field, there remains the whole problem of a revision of the constitution in the light of the experience of eighty years and in the light of Canada's identity as a federal state. This revision can only be made at a general conference between the dominion and the provinces, and such a conference ought not to be long delayed. Indeed, it should be held without any delay.

Then he made certain detailed observations, and I quote again:

For a proper settlement of the constitutional and economic questions that still remain, we in Nova Scotia shall continue to press. Let it not be thought for a moment here or elsewhere, that by simply increasing the subsidies to this province as is done under these proposals, Ottawa has rid itself of listening to just provincial demands and claims. Anybody who holds that view is sadly mistaken. In the words of a great Scottish warrior, "They have not seen the last of my bonnets and me."

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Drew: I am still quoting Hon. Angus Macdonald:

Thus far the dominion government has steadily refused to reconvene a general conference. I do not think it can long continue in this position. I believe that public opinion alone, if nothing else, will bring about the holding of a general conference on these important matters, even though one of the parties is reluctant to agree to such a meeting.

That is a general summary of the situation. Everything I have said is borne out by the record. In the face of that record, I

can only say that anyone who suggests that the premier of Ontario of that time, or the premier of Quebec, in any way prevented the reconvening of the conference, is challenging the record and is stating what is directly contrary to the truth.

This concentration of power which has been achieved is already producing highly unsatisfactory results, because the dominion authorities were able to get the exclusive field of personal income taxes. And they did that; because, when the governments of Ontario and Quebec refused to accept those arbitrary terms, they did not impose income taxes. By the invasion of other fields, particularly the succession duty field, which, according to the statement of the Minister of Finance at that time, was supposed to be left clear, this government through its Minister of Finance during the current fiscal year is overtaxing the people of Canada to the extent of at least \$600 million. That is what they do with the measure of centralization they have now achieved. I hesitate to think what they would do if they had been able to achieve that full measure of centralization which they were seeking and failed to realize only because the provincial premiers recognized the sound basis of the federal system.

This federal structure was intended to create checks and balances. It was intended to create checks on too great centralized taxing powers. It was intended to prevent the over-centralization of authority of any kind. Let us all remember what was done in order to carry that structure into effect. Following what was done in the United States, those who drafted our excellent constitution in the months prior to July, 1867, left with the provinces the exclusive jurisdiction over those personal affairs which largely determine the kind of life our people live from day to day.

The result is that under that federal constitution civil rights, property rights, the administration of justice, which establishes those rights through our courts, the municipal laws, the supervision of municipal affairs, which has so great an effect on the life of every one of us, and education, which determines the whole destiny and character of a nation, were all left exclusively with the provinces. That was done mainly with the idea that, so long as they retained their authority, there could be no usurpation of power by a central government at any time if, temporarily at least, power were assumed by those who believe in centralized power. It is just as important to preserve protecting provisions of that kind as it is to create them.

If the full protection of those measures is to be retained, then, under a new and revised system of taxation which will be to the