

THE WORKING OF FEDERAL INSTITUTIONS IN CANADA

I notice that in the announcement of this lecture I am referred to as having been for some time the Deputy of the Minister of Justice. That was a long time ago, but the fact that I once occupied the office probably equips me to say things about the working of Federal Institutions in Canada, which I would not otherwise have been able to say, and the fact that, just nine years after the British North America Act (Canada's Constitution) came into force, I assumed that office and remained in it until 1882, enables me to speak of the workings of our Federal System from practically the beginning of that System. It took the first ten years for the country to find its bearings under the new federation, and for the Dominion and the Provinces to settle down to an understanding of their true constitutional relations. It also took that time for the Dominion and the Mother Country to settle, satisfactorily, certain debatable questions respecting their relations, and to make clear that the principles relating to Ministerial responsibility in Canada did not differ from those relating to similar responsibility in England. It is a pleasant memory that I was appointed Deputy Minister of Justice upon the recommendation of the Honourable Edward Blake, when he was Minister, and I am sure that the loyal sons and daughters of the University of Toronto take pride in the thought that he—who shed such lustre upon his Alma Mater, first as a graduate and later as Chancellor of the University, was to a large extent instrumental in settling some of the most important questions arising under our constitution, not only when he was Minister of Justice, but also when he, as one of the greatest lawyers at the Bar, took part in