

conference—one session ended only a month ago—about its intention to introduce the present resolution. Not a word was breathed. Why not? Surely if the dominion-provincial conference is called into being for consultation between the dominion and the provinces on matters of mutual concern, it was reprehensible in the extreme on the part of the dominion government not to discuss this question with the premiers of the various provinces.

What conclusion may we draw to-day? The dominion government is not getting its own way in the dominion-provincial conference. It was most inflexible in its proposals. It was adamant. It did some talking down to the provinces; and on the whole those provinces have indicated that they are not the children of the dominion and that they have the right to support a status of their own within the terms of the pact of confederation.

It would seem now that the dominion government is going to attempt to teach those provinces a lesson, and show them that the dominion can go to Westminster and have the British North America Act amended without consultation with the provinces. Is this intended to be a lesson to those provinces that they had better be careful in the way they talk back to the dominion government at the dominion-provincial conference, and that, after all, they have no real and abiding right to what we would call provincial status or provincial rights, if parliament is prepared to act on the dictation of the government and pass quickly a resolution requesting amendment to the British North America Act?

I say that this whole procedure is fraught with serious danger. Whether members in the house argue to the contrary or not, the fact remains that if we pass the resolution and defeat the amendment offered by this party we are creating a precedent. We create the precedent of providing for an amendment to the constitution in an essential particular without first having consultation in any form with the provinces.

It is not enough to say that in times past there was not complete consultation with the provinces. Let us keep our eyes open. If this amendment is defeated and the resolution passes in the form in which it is introduced, we are creating a precedent, a precedent which, I suggest, any dominion government whose purpose is served by it, can put to work to seek other amendments in the future.

Finally, every word that has been uttered by hon. members to your right, Mr. Speaker, every word uttered by the Minister of Justice in his speech to-night and in his speech when opening the debate which referred to the

rights he contends parliament has to obtain amendments to the British North America Act, in a particular such as this, without consulting the provinces, is in the teeth of arguments in this house on more than one occasion by the late Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the late Right Hon. Ernest Lapointe. When the Minister of Justice discards completely the compact theory and discards completely the argument that the provinces are entitled to be consulted in the light of the compact to which the British North America Act gave form, he is arguing against the very principles championed in this chamber year in and year out by Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Right Hon. Ernest Lapointe.

I am not in the least impressed with the jubilant support given to the government's resolution by the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggarr, the leader of the C.C.F. He is only too anxious to see power centralized in parliament so that the rights of the provinces may be ridden over roughshod, if necessary, in order to bring about the socialist state he wishes to see created. Confederation is one of the surest guarantees we have in this country against bringing about a completely socialist state. The reason the socialist allies of the government are so vocal in support of a resolution of this kind is that it simply lends momentum to a movement which has progressed so far under the present government and which is daily progressing farther.

There has been a trend toward centralization, a trend toward amassing in the hands of the dominion government more and more power at the expense of the provinces, a trend which started during the war. The same mind that dominated the government in usurping the powers of the provinces in time of war still dominates the dominion government to-day. That same mind now states that they are prepared to disregard the fundamental rights of the provinces under the constitution. The hon. member for Rosetown-Biggarr has talked about Balkanizing Canada, but there is no surer way to Balkanize Canada than to ride roughshod over the constitution and the constitutional rights of the provinces.

Why has the dominion government failed to consult the provinces while the dominion-provincial conference has been pending? The only conclusion one can draw is that they wanted to find an easier way, a more direct way of achieving constitutional amendments; they wanted to achieve an easier technique for bringing about constitutional amendments when it suits their purposes. The whole method is fraught with peril for this country and for its federal system of government.