

Dominion-Provincial Conference

Mr. MacGuigan: Not at the moment.

Mr. Lewis: It is merely about what you have said now—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member who has the floor has indicated that he will not accept a question at this time.

Mr. MacGuigan: Well, Mr. Speaker, since I get the gist of the hon. member's question, and it is about the language I used, I will take the question now.

Mr. Lewis: Did I hear the hon. member say I was susceptible to anti-federal rigidities?

Mr. MacGuigan: Yes, that is the phrase I used. I consider the hon. member's centralist position to be anti-federal because it does not give the balance required. Indeed, I was listening very closely to him.

Mr. Lewis: I wish the hon. member had heard as well as listened.

Mr. MacGuigan: In conclusion, I would say that despite these concerns and reservations about the functioning of this committee, I am pleased that members of this house will have an opportunity to express themselves in the committee during its deliberations. I know there is no member of this house, from whatever party he may be, who will not put his country above his party or himself on questions of this kind.

[Translation]

Mr. Georges Valade (Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that in the few minutes allowed to members of the house to discuss such an important subject as the constitutional reform, it will not be possible to reach a consensus.

However, I think we have an opportunity to make a few concrete suggestions in answer to the invitation given this morning by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in his brief statement.

Before I came to the house today, Mr. Speaker, I read the proceedings of the debates on confederation. I refer to the volume reporting the debates of the 3rd session of the 8th parliament in 1865. On page 53, there is a statement made by the hon. Mr. Currie. I should point out that this dates back to 1865. This volume contains also the speech made by hon. Mr. Brown, and I quote:

"On a survey of the whole case, I do think that there is no doubt as to the high advantages that would result from a union of all the colonies, provided that terms of union could be found just to

all the contracting parties, and so framed as to secure harmony in the future administration of affairs. But it were wrong to conceal for a moment that the whole merit of the scheme of union may be completely marred by the character of its details."

Mr. Speaker this statement was made over a hundred years ago and it illustrates plainly that those who were busy outlining a new constitution foresaw that serious problems would arise, and that every province should be aware of its responsibilities within Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to revert briefly to the remarks made this morning by the right hon. Prime Minister.

I regret deeply the tone and the attitude of the Prime Minister, when he spoke of such a vital and important question as the revision of the constitution through the constitutional Conference. At one point, the Prime Minister, speaking of some provincial responsibilities, said, among other things, that the provinces could not shoulder the financial burden of air pollution control.

If the Prime Minister wanted to illustrate the dangers of air pollution he certainly has proven to the house that air pollution during the discussions is not less prejudicial.

The Prime Minister—I am sorry he is not here at the moment,—has been, to say the very least, pretentious, arrogant and insulting to the members of the house. Surely, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, whose main plank in his political platform was Canadian unity, could have been expected to act this morning in a more responsible manner.

The Prime Minister said that he was anxious to hear the members of the opposition and then announced in the same breath that he had to leave for Quebec and meet "Le Bonhomme Carnaval" and other V.I.P.'s participating in that celebration. I understand of course that the Prime Minister has obligations, but in my opinion, when for the first time in history the House had to discuss a question as important as the new constitution, the Prime Minister might have made a point to delay his departure.

• (3:50 p.m.)

[English]

I know he has explained, but he is still away. We expected more this morning from the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) than the provocative and cynical argument he presented. The Prime Minister has asked the opposition to bring forth points of view and make suggestions, but he refused to accept those