

Defence and the Minister of Agriculture, who took such prominent parts in the recent by-election there, may be able to give us some information on that point before we rise.

Mr. STREIGHT: They made a good job of it.

Mr. BENNETT: The hon. gentleman says they seem to have made a good job of it, but just what the job was yet remains to be known.

Now, sir, I do submit to the house and the country that it is easy to see the cause of the present disunion and disharmony, which have never been so great in the history of this country, even in the days of 1887, when Mr. Fielding appealed to the electors of Nova Scotia for the breaking up of confederation; not even then, because after all the west was but little settled; two provinces did not exist at all and the others had not attained their present population. The Liberal party have dealt with these matters on a purely political basis. The editor in chief or president of the Winnipeg Free Press pointed out some years ago, in dealing with tariff matters, that the Liberal party had dealt with the tariff purely as a political matter, a vote catcher. That was the way he put it; how many votes would it get? In dealing with the problems of the west, with our natural resources, with the subsidies we were to get in 1905 and in subsequent years, they dealt with those matters on the basis of pure politics. If we had a right to our resources in 1926 and 1928, did we not have a right to them in 1905? These are acts of Liberal governments. These are the things that have brought about the stresses and strains which have resulted in the disunity now confronting us. It is known by all who get below the surface that that is so. Remember this, that those who in days gone by pleaded that the resources should be given to the provinces when they became provinces, were condemned, but they lived long enough to see the men who condemned them accept their proposals.

Then we proceed to the next point, the very point that the Rowell commission has been appointed to deal with, namely the distribution of legislative powers. In the speech from the throne we are told that with respect to one item, namely unemployment insurance, it is to be brought about by an amendment to the British North America Act, and the cooperation of the provinces has been sought. Who represent the provinces? Is it the government at the provincial capital? Do the members of the executive represent it, or the electors? How do they amend the

[Mr. Bennett.]

constitution in South Africa? How do they amend the constitution in Australia? In neither case can it be amended unless an opportunity is afforded the people at least to express their will. Am I to take the voice of the premier of one of the provinces? Am I to take his view and amend the constitution of this country accordingly? Am I to take the view of five other premiers with him and amend the constitution accordingly? Am I to take the views of these premiers as representing the electors? Is that dictatorship or democracy? Which is it? What right have I to say that a premier of a province and his government represent the will of the people with respect to this matter? It has not been submitted to the electors; they have had no opportunity of dealing with it or of expressing their will with respect to it. Have I a right to deal with the question in that way? In this house there are members from these provinces. They represent the electors of the provinces with respect to federal matters, and their views must be quite as important as the views of those who constitute the governments of these provinces, unless indeed the will of the legislature is expressed, and even if the will of the legislature is expressed, what then?

I happened to be in Australia when they were dealing with the amendment of their constitution with respect to a vital matter. What happened? First of all, they settled what the question should be, and then by plebiscite they submitted it to the people of the whole commonwealth. It is provided that on the one hand there must be a majority of the people to support it and, on the other, there must be a majority of the states which are agreed to it. Applying this principle to Canada it would mean that we should have a plebiscite to amend our constitution, if we want to amend it, and that a given number of the provinces should have returned a majority in favour of the change. What right has any government to proceed upon the assumption that the premier of a province has said, "I agree to the change"? What about the people? What about the electors? What about the members of the assembly supporting that government? The premier of New Brunswick says, "I am going to consult the legislature." Well, that is going a step farther towards democracy—but it falls there. Why? It falls because the issue is not submitted to the people in terms.

When one considers the manner of amending the constitution of the United States it is not by a reference to the vote of the people, but by the voice of the House of Representatives elected every two years, the voice of