

parliamentary institutions, and all that they signify of freedom in the State, is due more perhaps to Sir Wilfrid's life-long advocacy of British principles of government than to any other single influence. To him, as to the Fathers of Confederation, as the Right Honourable Sir Wilfrid Laurier said on a recent memorable occasion in this House, the British Constitution was as a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day to guide this young country to union and to nationhood.

With institutions, as with human beings, it is the spirit which is the real, the vital, the truly precious and sacred thing. The institution, however venerable it may be, the edifice, however noble, that lacks the spirit that has lent it greatness, may become the very opposite of all that it appears. Instead of the citadel of freedom, it may become the stronghold of arbitrary power, or the abode of indecision and inaction, denying to others the very freedom which it is intended to conserve. That such has been the unfortunate tendency with respect to parliamentary government under the present Unionist administration, and its progenitor, the Nationalist-Conservative administration of immediately preceding years, is unhappily all too true.