

*The Address—Mr. Garson*

that exist in that country they would not hesitate for a minute to do everything in their power to help in every way they could. There were other Canadians and other members of the House of Commons in that delegation. I hope that those members will take part in this debate and substantiate the statements I have made as to conditions there.

We are blessed with plenty in this country, and I make one more appeal to the members of this House of Commons and to the people of Canada. Let us as a united country do everything we can to support these gallant people, who today are doing everything in their power to defend themselves and also, in my estimation, defending the people of this country at the same time.

**Hon. Stuart S. Garson (Minister of Justice):** Mr. Speaker, it had not been my intention to take part in this debate but for the fact that the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) devoted nearly the whole of a two and a half hour speech to a presentation of his views on dominion-provincial relations, views which I regret to say I cannot but regard as being palpably incorrect and ill-informed in many important respects. We on this side of the house would be derelict in our duty if we allowed those views to go uncorrected. The leader of the opposition, for example, said:

Let me say without reservation that any such statement—

That is, any such statement that Premier Duplessis of Quebec and the premier of Ontario had prevented agreement at the dominion-provincial conference.

—is utterly false and wholly unrelated to the truth.

I join issue with that statement of the hon. gentleman. I say that no two persons contributed more than those two premiers to the failure of the 1945-46 conference to reach an agreement.

I not only say this but, sir, with your permission I now propose to prove it. While I thus join issue with the hon. gentleman, I wish to compliment him upon having been overwhelmingly eloquent and convincing when dealing at great length with those matters which no one disputes. Surely we all agree, for example, that for Canada a federal state is much superior to a unitary state, and indeed is the only possible state for this country. I think we agree likewise with my hon. friend's statement that—

For many long years it has been apparent that substantial changes were necessary to bring to its full efficiency and vigour the combined system of national government we describe as confederation.

Who, may I ask, in this assembly would not do everything to preserve and protect the Canadian federal system and constitution under which it operates? I myself am in favour of the greatest possible measure of

[Mr. Stuart (Charlotte).]

effective provincial autonomy. Indeed, my interest in dominion-provincial relations, when I served under the present hon. member for Neepawa (Mr. Bracken), was motivated, as his was at that time and I am sure is today, by a desire to make real and effective the provincial rights of my province, which, because of a lack of provincial revenues, were in many important respects wholly illusory.

Likewise, I am opposed to centralization of power in a dominion government as it was centralized under the Bennett government. This was not because Prime Minister Bennett desired that it should be centralized, but because under the conditions of that time several provinces lacked the revenues to exercise their provincial rights, and therefore had to go to Ottawa and submit to Ottawa's conditions, mostly reasonable, in order to secure from the Bennett government dominion funds with which to exercise their provincial rights. This is not provincial autonomy. It is provincial subjection to dominion control, and it exists under the financial plan of confederation.

I also believe in the protection of the rights of the minority for the most excellent reason that the population of my province is one of the most conspicuous minorities in the Dominion of Canada, and is likely always to remain so.

In all of these points of agreement between us, however, I refuse to take second place to my hon. friend, the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew). Indeed, sir, I claim a prior place to him because while I, during the whole of my public life both in provincial politics and in federal politics, have always held these views, he is a more recent convert to them, as quotations, made so appropriately in this debate by the right hon. the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) and the leader of the C.C.F. party (Mr. Coldwell), so amply prove.

Let me now set out the points upon which I am in complete disagreement with the hon. gentleman. I disagree entirely with his interpretation of the history of Canada at the time of confederation. As he stated it to this house, it is in my opinion the very antithesis of the historical facts. I object, for example, to his assertion that the Canadian constitution was patterned after the United States constitution and inspired by the Federalist Papers, and that we adopted from that country a system of checks and balances. I suggest that the influence which United States federalism had upon the fathers of confederation in this country was in the direction exactly the opposite to that which he told this chamber that it was. The main circumstance which, in the great republic to the south of us, influenced the fathers of con-