

The Address—Mr. Balcer

after all a fact that Mr. Abbott will never be able to challenge. The provinces, the municipalities and the school boards are hard up for money while Ottawa is rolling in riches. The inferior levels of administration are deprived of the means of fulfilling the duties which under the constitution are theirs but Ottawa has enough money to intrude into some fields of action from which it is excluded by our constitution. That is an unescapable fact which nobody, not even Mr. Abbott, Mr. St. Laurent or any other federal minister, can deny.

Therefore it is very unfortunate that the federal Minister of Finance came to Montreal to rehash the same platitudes as a challenge to the Tremblay commission. He should have, at least, delayed for a few months such an untimely intervention.

Mr. Speaker, the holding of a federal-provincial conference is as imperative today as it was last year or two years ago. I remember very well—if I may go back a few years—that in 1949, on the opening of the first session of the 21st parliament, the present government was harbouring vastly different dispositions. At that time, the only things we heard of in the house were the repatriation of the constitution, a federal-provincial conference, the abolition of appeals to the privy council. I remember that the supporters of the government stated in September that the present Prime Minister would go down in Canadian history as the Prime Minister who repatriated confederation, and who settled once and for all the matter of federal and provincial jurisdiction.

There have been, it is true, a few conferences between the federal authorities and the provinces. There again, the atmosphere was quite pleasant. I remember having read that the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) had stated at the last conference that it was a great stride toward a solution of the problem and that we could at last bring some measure of finality to the settlement of that serious problem. Unfortunately, there was no more talk about it. And at least for the past year the federal government has quietly sat back and taken an attitude of indifference. It is no longer interested in the matter and is quite satisfied to leave Quebec alone and not give the province what it is rightfully entitled to from the fiscal point of view.

I hope that during the present session, or at least in the not too distant future, the government will try to face the facts in order that we may finally see in Canada the matter settled in a definite way, so that provincial governments may be in a position to help their institutions as they should and so that municipalities may have sufficient funds to

[Mr. Balcer.]

undertake the necessary public works. I believe it is in the interest of Canada as a whole to undertake a further study of the matter. I hope we will be given the opportunity, during this year, to attend a new federal-provincial conference.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I note with regret that the speech from the throne did not mention health insurance. Here again we have legislation that should not be enacted without due consideration. This is legislation which cannot be implemented without a new federal-provincial agreement. This is again another example of the importance of good relations between the federal government and the provinces. I hope that we will have soon the opportunity of seeing something being done about that as well as about other matters.

Mr. Speaker, the Korean war has come to an end. The international situation may still be critical, it may still be advisable to keep the country on the alert, but we may rest assured that the people of this country as a whole are hoping for substantial tax reductions in a not so distant future. I feel that the people of Canada as a whole would also like the government to carry out its contribution to the Colombo plan and co-operate to an even greater extent toward the economic rehabilitation of the Asiatic countries and other needy countries.

I hope that all this will come before we are asked again to vote millions for a new war which will settle nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I once more congratulate you on your promotion.

(Text):

Mr. J. L. MacDougall (Vancouver-Burrard):

Mr. Speaker, I rise early in this debate for three specific purposes; but before I enumerate them I should like first of all to congratulate you, sir, on your elevation to the position of first commoner of our nation. I would also congratulate your lovely wife on being the first lady of the land. In this twenty-second parliament of Canada I rejoice with those who have been returned, and I grieve for those who have been left at home. In the twenty-first parliament we had a fine group of people. However, the electorate at large cannot be depended upon at all times so far as their choice is concerned. If they could be, possibly I should not be here.

By and large, regardless of political differences, this parliament of Canada is possibly the greatest cross-section of our population extant today. With a potential four-year period of comradeship and debate I sincerely trust that we will add in great measure to