

been informed that the price of sole leather has been raised three times in Canada since the declaration of war. The price index shows that wholesale prices have risen 14.4 per cent since the war began, yet we are told that the cost of living has advanced much less than that. I know it cannot be so; just ask the housewife. We have war inflation. Wages will have to increase, and the vicious spiral is upon us.

I am not going to apologize for dealing with the Rowell-Sirois report. This is one of the most important matters that should engage the attention of parliament. I will try to compress what I have to say with respect to it. I regret exceedingly that the Chief Justice of Ontario, who originally headed the commission, had to resign because of ill health, but I do congratulate the government on having been fortunate enough to obtain the services of Mr. Sirois, whom I have known for quite a number of years and with whom I have collaborated professionally in days gone by. He carried on with great competence and dignity, and I met him in Fredericton when he acted on the commission.

I have always felt that, however eminent was the personnel of the commission, its composition had a decidedly political flavour. It would have been wiser if someone who took a rather different view of our constitutional problems had been a member. That suggestion was made before, I believe, but it was not adopted. However, I do not wish to be taken as in any degree attacking the personnel of the commission. They were all students and exponents of our constitution, although it is fair, I think, to say that they were all of the same school of thought.

The report is voluminous and it is beyond my capacity to analyse it all. At this stage it is not necessary. I have, however, read the summary of its recommendations and portions of the report itself. I have likewise read with great interest a number of articles analysing the recommendations. With some of the recommendations I am in accord; with some I feel sure there will be great difficulty in reaching agreement and action, and as to others I hold the view that they should not be implemented at all. The time has not arrived, however, at which any specific declarations should be made with respect to my particular position. I suggest that it is wholly wrong to say that this report represents "a new charter for Canada," as was suggested on Friday last by the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George (Mr. Claxton). It is not a new bill of rights. Rather is it a reorientation of the powers conferred by the British North America Act—a reallocation of powers.

As I understand our constitution, we now have all the powers we need as a member of the British empire, save and except the right to amend our own constitution. The most vital part is a reallocation of the powers of taxation, and it is that part of the report to which attention should be given.

On Thursday last the Prime Minister announced the calling of a dominion-provincial conference to be held some time in January, while parliament is not in session, and he laid on the table—and this has been printed in votes and proceedings—his letter of November 2 to all the nine provincial premiers. As I recollect, it was reported that eight provincial premiers had accepted the invitation to attend, and since the Prime Minister made the announcement the premier of Ontario has announced the intention of his government to attend and participate. But the announcement was coupled with a warning that "Ontario is opposed to any move to raid Ontario taxpayers for the benefit of other provinces." Well, to say the least, that is rather a jarring note and does not suggest unanimity. I do not wish to characterize it as anything worse than that. Apparently the premier of Ontario was opposed to any discussion, according to newspaper report, taking the view that there should be no possibility of any controversial issue arising which might impair national unity and the effective prosecution of the war.

It has been said in the press that the conference will be a re-confederation conference. In my view this is a rather large order and one that is not likely to be achieved. There are in this country some people who are apt to view lightly the achievements of the fathers of confederation. I do not share that view. I hold the view that they did a wonderful work in that they created a nation in the northern half of this hemisphere, and I believe that their work will endure. The hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George on Friday quoted some unnamed private member with reference to the British North America Act as speaking of "the miasma of the constitution". That, I suggest, is a misnomer. Our constitution is not a miasma, but the interpretation of the constitution by judicial bodies has in a degree led us into a miasma of doubt as to just what at times the constitution really is. It is a repetition of the theory enunciated by a great chief justice of the United States that "the constitution is what the judges say it is"—speaking in reference to the constitution of the United States. That was never the intention of the founding fathers so far as Canada is concerned. Down to 1910 no great difficulty had arisen out of the interpretation, but in that year a noble law lord developed a new theory from which