



Bulletin

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CONFERENCE TO REVIEW THE CONSTITUTION OF CANADA

In his opening statement to the Federal-Provincial Constitutional Conference in Ottawa on February 5, Prime Minister L.B. Pearson said that there were times in the life of a country when "the assurance of good intentions, the discharge of normal duty and acceptance of routine responsibility are not enough". Such times, he said, demanded the "exercise of courage and decision that go far beyond the needs of the moment". "I believe that this is such a time for Canada," the Prime Minister declared. "Here the road forks."

Excerpts from Mr. Pearson's address follow:

...Ontario is in many ways central in these discussions; as the most populous province, and the richest, and as the province where there is the longest tradition of living and working together with French Canada. I think of those days after the passage of the Act of Union of 1841, when Kingston was the capital of Canada; when Robert Baldwin was elected to the legislature at a by-election in Quebec and Louis Hippolyte Lafontaine was elected at a by-election in Ontario.

The position of Ontario is central for another reason. More may be asked of it than of any other province in the way of innovation and magnanimity. In its turn, the loss that would be caused by dismemberment would be almost as great for Ontario as it would be for Quebec. Ontario would be weakened and impoverished as a result; so much has the character and flavour of life in English-speaking Eastern Canada depended on our partnership in so many ways with French Canadians.

This question of what kind of a Canada would be left if Quebec were to withdraw from Confederation will be deeply pondered by English-speaking Cana-

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dians in every other part of the country as well, even though the tragic results may be less obvious the farther away you move from the Province of Quebec.

Perhaps it is in the Western Provinces that the cardinal problems we must grapple with today are likely to seem most remote. There, the heartland of French Canada is far away. The settlements of French Canadians are few and infrequent, and life has been deeply coloured by the flow of immigrants from countries other than France or the British Isles.

NATIONAL SURVIVAL AT STAKE

I would beg Canadians of such different ethnic origins to believe that any proposals of the Federal Government - or indeed of any other government - at this conference are put forward in full recognition of the great contribution they have made to Canadian life, not only in the West but in every other part of Canada, and in full recognition also of the sacrifices they have made to serve and enrich this country. I believe that these other Canadians will find the new course we are proposing for Canada easier to accept and support if they remember that the country to which they have committed themselves and their children, and the country where they have found their freedom, may not endure without a great new act of accommodation. For let me be explicit - what is at stake, in