

National Centennial Act

or the opinion of somebody who has not made any particular investigation into the matter? I submit there was no need for any change to the title.

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): You do not even know the reason for it.

Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton): Well, these interruptions do not matter to me. The hon. gentleman has a right to his opinion as I also have a right to mine. The difference is that I have proven mine, whereas all hon. members opposite have is mere assertion. However, that is not unusual for them. If we pass this resolution as it stands I consider that we will, in effect, be saying that we cannot do business under the title of the National Centennial Act. It will be construed that we have not yet become a nation. I wonder what those heroes who went over in the first world war and those who went over in the second world war would think about that.

Mr. Lamontagne: May I ask the hon. member a question. When did somebody in this house say that there was no Canadian nation?

Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton): I said that if we passed this resolution it would be construed as an admission that we have never been a nation. There is no one so blind as he who will not see, and there is no one so deaf as he that will not hear.

Mr. Macdonald: And there is no one so dumb as he who has nothing to say.

Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton): Well, the hon. member for Rosedale should be an authority on that particular subject. I said that I did not subscribe to any such fallacious doctrine that we have never been a nation. Go upstairs to the sixth floor, and in the dining room you will see pictures of at least two outstanding prime ministers of Canada, Sir John Macdonald and Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Do you remember, Mr. Chairman, what Sir Wilfrid Laurier said when he was asked about the place of Canada in the commonwealth, or in the British empire, as it was then called? He said: "Daughter am I in my mother's house, but mistress in my own". If he was mistress in his own, then we were a nation; there is no question about that. That is what the great Laurier said. He said we stand for the unity of Canada. Only a few days ago I read, because I was not here at the time, what the hon. member for Three Rivers said in support of the principle of the unity of Canada. That is the important thing, the thing we should be stressing.

Mr. Lamontagne: Will he speak during this debate?

[Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton).]

Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton): I said I was not here.

That is all I have to say as far as our nationhood is concerned. If our friends over there wish to deny our nationhood, that is their privilege: I am not going to deny it.

Toward the end of the resolution, it says: To provide also that the centennial commission shall consist of a commissioner, an associate commissioner—

I see no objection to that. Indeed, if I wished to extend compliments to the minister I would say that the adjective "associate" seems to be an improvement over the word "deputy". I am expressing no objection to that change. Then, the resolution continues:

—and not more than 12 directors in lieu of eight directors—

This brings us back to the story of the Atlantic development board. Hon. gentlemen opposite had to gain control of that board so they brought in six extra directors to accomplish this purpose. The resolution speaks here of four more, bringing the number up to 12. I will say that the commissioner appointed by the previous government is just about the best appointment which could be made in Canada.

Mr. Lamontagne: No patronage.

Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton): No one has more knowledge of Canada than Mr. John Fisher and we are fortunate in having his services at our disposal. Four new members are to be appointed. We should have those names as soon as possible.

Mr. Lamontagne: You took a year and a half to appoint the national conference.

Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton): I would prefer that the president of the council did a little more acting and a little less talking. It will be better for him and it will be better for his party, too. The resolution ends:

—and to provide further for certain administrative changes in connection therewith.

I have grave misgivings about this. I presume we shall know in a short time, when the resolution passes, just what is contemplated. I hope the minister will not make any attempt to introduce changes which will be considered as being partisan in character. To do so would, in my opinion, be to defeat the very object of this legislation and I hope it will not come to pass.

I say, in summary, that some of the concepts which the government are now recommending to us are incorrectly founded. I do not subscribe to them. I think there may be other things in the legislation, things we have not so far seen, which may be equally difficult to accept. I urge the minister to make