

votion, his love and his life; but though his heart will throb to the tune of O, Canada, no Canadian will more sincerely or more piously sing to God that the king of this autonomous dominion within the commonwealth will be saved, made happy and glorious, and, most of all, victorious over all his enemies of to-day or to-morrow.

The speech from the throne refers to federal-provincial relations. I need not dwell on these matters now, but it might not be amiss to state at this time that this whole subject is an exceedingly delicate one, fraught with dangers and difficulties. The sittings of the commission have shown how much concerned the eastern provinces are over the subject of their autonomy, while the western provinces seem willing to transfer to the federal government those prerogatives which they are financially unable to exercise. A detailed trip through the west last fall has convinced me that no finer, stauncher Canadians can be found than those in the west. They have gone through a terrible ordeal and have real grievances. It must not be forgotten, however, that the eastern provinces have had hard times of their own, and although I imagine they would be prepared to go to the extreme limit in generous treatment and reasonable compromise, apparently they are not willing at this time to consent to amendments to the British North America Act. Speaking for myself alone, and with no authority to speak but for myself, I would say that the apparent distrust Quebec places on any move to amend the Canadian constitution is the fear that, once the door has been opened, there may come later on some hostile majority which will deprive the province of the prerogatives which it values most—autonomy as to language, religion, education and local government.

There is much talk about national unity, and I imagine hon. members opposite are going to use that as a political catchery at the next general election. But I say to the house to-night: There is no surer way to augment the present disunity than to foster centralization and constitutional amendments at this time. Surely, with the situation as it is, we are not going to take the chance of provoking a cleavage between east and west. All other avenues must be explored before we resort to amendment and centralization.

Amendments will not put money into the pockets of our people, nor will they provide good crops for our western brothers. Centralization will not solve unemployment, nor will it bring back that healthy economic equilibrium which we once enjoyed. The remedy and the panacea lie elsewhere.

[Mr. Héon.]

That famous parliamentarian, Burke, speaking in the imperial parliament when the Constitutional Act of Canada of 1791 was being discussed, said:

It would be pure folly to try to amalgamate two races with different languages and law. The constitution must be founded on human nature, if it is to remain stable.

These words should be borne in mind by hon. members at this time. It would be most unfair to suggest that the opposition to centralization is purely political and provincial. Provincial legislators I have had the honour to meet, from both east and west, are not at all devoid of patriotism and national spirit. They are only uttering the sentiment of their cabinets and other elected representatives of the people within their local assemblies. They should not, nor can they do otherwise.

Let us not forget the way in which we became a confederation, and those diversities which continue to prevail in race, religion and language. Whatever we do, we cannot change our geography, or the origins of our two main groups. And because we cannot do so there is, in my mind, just as much need for autonomy in local rights as there ever was. I have the utmost confidence that after the report of the Rowell-Sirois commission has been tabled and discussed, and an interprovincial conference held, cooperation and good will will prevail among the delegates of the dominion and the provinces, and some satisfactory solution will yet be found. I cannot say I have lost faith in the inherent ability of our Canadian public men to find a proper way out, just as they did in 1867.

The speech from the throne carries ominous warnings as to the international situation. I should like to express a few strictly personal thoughts on this matter. I want it distinctly understood that as I speak I am speaking for myself alone, and that no person in the house can be bound directly or indirectly by what I shall have to say.

First, I must confess that I cannot share the opinion which seems to be prevalent that we, the elected representatives of the people, should not dare discuss the international situation, or say or do anything which could be construed as meaning that we approve one policy or disapprove another policy of some country which apparently may be on friendly terms with us. There is a French proverb which says: "C'est du choc des idées que jaillit la lumière"—"A spark of light will come from the shock of ideas." That could be very well applied to discussion of the foreign policy to be pursued by this country, in the face of a continental war. The attitude that