

Therefore I am driven back to the assumption that when the Prime Minister was giving countenance to that broad statement, it was not his intention thereby to abrogate the provisions of the British North America Act, which is a statute of the Imperial parliament defining the minority and other provincial rights to which we had agreed by convention and arrangement upon the organization of the provinces of Canada into one great confederation. If there is equality of status, perhaps I may add another term to the definition which was given by the leader of the opposition (Mr. Guthrie). Equality of status may mean that the Canadian parliament cannot of its own volition override acts of the Imperial parliament; and it may mean, just as it has meant since confederation was formed, that in the last analysis the Imperial parliament has a deciding voice in respect to the nature and extent of the amendments to the British North America Act which are sought by the Canadian parliament or by the provinces of Canada. If in order to achieve our national destiny we wish to abolish the rights of any province, or if we wish otherwise to modify our own constitution, I think we will be driven back upon the old procedure of asking the Imperial parliament to ratify a new agreement, concurred in not only by the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, but concurred in also by the provincial legislatures of Canada in so far as their special rights and interests might be affected.

Now, the definition of the office of Governor General and of his status does not give validity to one contention of the Prime Minister advanced during the recent elections. I understood, without quoting his exact words, that not only in this House in the last days of June, but throughout this country on the platform, he expressed the contention that the life and independence of this very parliament in which we sit may be determined, by the sole and arbitrary will of the prime minister in the exercise of his sole and arbitrary discretion, by the advice which he shall give on each and every occasion and under each and every condition to His Excellency respecting the dissolution of parliament. That I understand to be the new constitutional principle which he announced on the eve of the last election, and on which he sought the verdict of the people. All I can say to that is this. We do not wish, I think, to create a new master; we do not wish that a prime minister representing either party should be invested with such arbitrary power that, whenever his policy meets with the disapprobation of parliament, he can

thereupon destroy its very life and hold possible dissolution, at his discretion, as a weapon of blackmail over the heads of the independent members of this House of Commons. If that new principle is to be introduced into the constitution of this country, it should not be introduced by mere platform utterances or in the confusion of a general election; but first, at least, it should be introduced as a rule and principle to guide His Excellency in the matter of dissolution, a rule and principle that should be submitted to parliament itself, and first be approved of by the members of parliament. I do not think that either the House or the country will vest the prime minister with an arbitrary power that has never existed in English history since the days of Cromwell.

I will not take any more time, Mr. Speaker, but there are other very important matters which the members of the Imperial conference, in their wise discretion, have left for further consideration by committees of the Imperial conference and, I suppose, by their respective governments. These are:

1. The details of methods and forms of communication and consultation between the British government and the governments of the dominions;
2. The scope and application of the Colonial Laws Validity Act;
3. The right of each dominion to legislate with extra-territorial effect, or to give extra-territorial operation to its existing legislation;
4. The scope and application of Imperial Shipping Acts to Canadian shipping and Canadian seamen;
5. The status of Canadian shipping and Canadian seamen and citizens in the event of Great Britain being involved in foreign wars in which Canada may refuse actively to participate;
6. The restriction of appeals to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in criminal as well as civil matters;
7. The confusion that may arise by reason of conventions or treaties made by His Majesty on behalf of two or more parts of the empire, which are more or less inconsistent in their terms;

And this is very important:

8. The responsibility of Great Britain with respect to the enforcement of treaties made by His Majesty on behalf of a dominion government, which the foreign state may repudiate or refuse to carry out;
9. The obligations, moral or otherwise, of the dominions as members of the League of Nations, with respect to the treaty of Locarno.

These are not defined.

10. The reservation of dominion legislation.

All these, thank Providence, are left for further consideration and discussion.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I think we may express our grateful appreciation of the services of the Prime Minister in London, and