

little has been made public as to what occurred at those conferences except a statement once in a while from the government benches that we cannot do thus and so until the provinces agree. Surely if ever any government of Canada had a mandate from the people to amend the British North America Act, or at least to do things even to that extent, this government has. Hon. gentlemen who are now members of this government went out and told the people that they would do these things if they were elected. In my opinion that mandate is of more force and effect than that which any British parliament, any mother of parliaments, can give. I consider that the government have a mandate, especially since they asked for it. The time is long past for any further delay in the taking of steps to secure an amendment to the British North America Act to enable the government to carry on necessary social services such as old age pensions, workmen's compensation, unemployment, health insurance and all these matters. The official opposition has through its leader put itself on record as favourable to it, I know that the Liberal party in the province of Ontario are in favour of it, because they have had it in their platform for three or four years. Steps should be taken, especially after our experience of the last four years, to secure an amendment of the British North America Act so that the federal government can keep control over its own finances and take charge of all these social services.

Mr. BENNETT: I mentioned to this committee the other day in answer to observations made by the hon. member for North Waterloo (Mr. Euler) that I was of the opinion that the constitution would have to be amended in order to enable matters affecting social services to be dealt with by the federal power. I suggest to the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Heenan) that he communicate with the leader of his party in the province of Quebec. I hold in my hand a newspaper in which already, as a result of the very few observations I made the other evening, we see on the front page in large headlines:

Bennett would revise the constitution.

Taschereau defends the rights of the provinces.

Then there is a picture of the Prime Minister, under which it says:

Right Hon. R. B. Bennett, Prime Minister of Canada, who signified his intention to make [Mr. Heenan.]

amendments to the constitution of Canada for the purpose of dealing with social measures.

Then there is a picture of Mr. Taschereau, the premier of Quebec;

—who has constituted himself the new champion of provincial autonomy and is opposed to any changes in the Canadian constitution without a conference between Ottawa and the provinces, and the unanimous consent of all the provinces.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): Which paper is that?

Mr. BENNETT: This is the Sherbrooke Tribune of April 12, and similar statements appeared in other newspapers in Quebec. With the best of intentions I commend to the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River the very pleasant task of spending the recess in converting to his principles the premier of Quebec, and I doubt not that after he has laboured with that gentleman long and arduously he will have induced him to believe that these amendments are necessary. I leave that task to the hon. gentleman.

Mr. HEENAN: If I were to use the words of the right hon. Prime Minister probably I would say, as was said from the platform in 1930, that I will not prescribe until I am called in.

Mr. BENNETT: You have been a volunteer prescriber.

Mr. HEENAN: There is also the fact that I talk a little Gaelic; I am not so sure that Premier Taschereau would understand that, and I know I would not understand his French, so I think probably the Prime Minister would make a better job of it.

I realize that there is something in what the Prime Minister says; I realize that if we wait here until we get the nine provinces to agree to the amendment of the British North America Act it never will be amended. I recall a conference I attended here in 1927, when not only Premier Taschereau and his government but the government of Nova Scotia as well were unalterably opposed to changing the British North America Act. At that time the government of Nova Scotia was headed by the late Premier Harrington and was represented here by the present Minister of Finance. The province of Ontario, represented by the present attorney general, Hon. Mr. Price, and my old friend Hon. Howard Ferguson, was opposed also. So here we are