

Was there ever a truer statement than that contained in the famous encyclical of the pope on labour and social questions, that observation which he makes to all rulers—after having denounced communism, after having denounced even socialism as incapable of remedying the evils of the day, after having also denounced the abuses of capitalism, the concentration of wealth and what he calls, quite properly, the economic dictatorship that has taken the place of the public power in most countries,—when he says, addressing himself to the men responsible for the maintenance of law in the countries of the world: “More guilty than the preachers of communism are those who, having received from the people and from God the power to legislate, neglect to make use of their power to correct those abuses out of which revolutions spring up.” That happens to have been written by a pope; but I hope that my friends in this house, to whatever creed they may belong, realize that this is not the dictum of the chief of a religion or of a sect. It is the opinion of a man who receives information from the whole world over, who relies upon traditions of order, upon justice and charity, and who appeals to the men who govern in order to make justice prevail in the lands that are confided to their care.

Can that be done by any one party? I do not believe it. I do not believe you can have the strength of public opinion in this country, or in any country, that must be at the back of the necessary measures of reform to curb the power of finance, to liquidate abnormal capital, to distinguish between real capital and false capital, to wipe out what has been stolen from the public and make safer thereby what is legitimate in investment; nor can you bring about a better distribution of the goods necessary to the welfare of the people in such a way that the farmer will get a better price for his produce and the poor devil in the city will not have to pay three times as much to buy food for his family—you cannot, I say, readjust these great questions of economic balance and bring about a better distribution of wealth through the control of capital unless you have a very strong opinion at your back, and unless you can be sure that your opponents will not denounce you as revolutionists or bolshevists. On the other hand you cannot maintain the present state of things by creating the fear of arousing a revolution, without being exposed, and rightly exposed, to the charge that you are making use of power and of a majority to maintain abuses such as have brought revolution in all countries where they have existed.

[Mr. Bourassa.]

Is it two years ago that my right hon. friend the leader of the opposition compared the present state of things to the old feudal system? I felt disposed to tell him then what I say now, that I think that was a slander on the feudal lords; because although some feudal lords abused their power, and although there came a time, of course, when the balance between their privileges and their social obligations was disturbed, yet every privilege that was granted to a high or a small lord under the feudal system was at once a reward for his public services and an inducement for him and his descendants to continue those services. But under the present system the possessors of wealth, the creators of false wealth, especially, those who, like the electric monopoly in Montreal, connected with the Royal Bank and the Montreal Trust, and which exercises upon the city of Montreal and upon all the municipalities within a radius of one hundred miles from that city a domination which no feudal lord ever exercised over his domain—what responsibility do they carry? None. It is an anonymous corporation which has received its power from a government in Quebec, and every time it is attacked it invokes the constitution.

Now I am a friend of the constitution and I stand for its maintenance; but just as I say you will not maintain what is legitimate, I will not say in the capitalistic system, but in the use of capital for the development of industry, by allowing the owners of capital to do whatever they like, neither will you maintain the constitution of Canada by making use of the constitutional argument in the province to say: This is not our business; it is Ottawa's business; nor by us here saying: We cannot interfere because it is a matter that belongs to the province.

The Prime Minister has started on a good path. I was delighted at those two conferences at comparatively short intervals between the federal authority and the provincial. That is a beginning of cooperation. But the Prime Minister of Canada, who has a larger responsibility than the premier of any province, must make them understand quite clearly at those conferences that if this parliament does something to remedy not merely the surface but the real causes of the evil, they must follow suit or he will let the people know where the responsibility lies. It is all very well for purposes of discussion to keep these conferences secret; but when it comes to a decision, if the premier of any province, or the premiers of two or more provinces take upon themselves to block any remedial legislation that may be suggested by the Prime