

*The Address—Mr. Diefenbaker*

expected. We want to know the facts. I ask the Minister of Justice, that believer in the independence of Canada, who explains anti-colonialism, are we not going to be a most colonial country when we are not going to have our own constitution enacted by the parliament of Canada? We are going to have to go to the United Kingdom to provide the basis upon which we, in Canada, can amend our constitution.

I should have liked to hear Mackenzie King on that subject before the present Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill) became one of his trusted lieutenants. What would he have said had he known that we, in 1965, are going to the United Kingdom to say: Please, give us the right to amend our constitution in this way. It will stay over there as a statute. We want it to be a statute of the Parliament of Canada so that we can examine each and every part of it. We have tried everything to get this government to take a new look at the matter, but without result. I think we all owe a great debt of gratitude to the premier of Quebec for his clear statement on that program last evening which revealed who has the joker up his sleeve and which of the two jurisdictions is going to be in the inferior position. Let us make it a Canadian document. Let us make it eligible for amendment in the light of the changing needs that take place.

We in this party have consistently endeavoured to bring about the repatriation, if I can use that expression, of the constitution, but we were unable to secure the consent of two of the provinces. What is our suggestion in this connection? We remain unchanged from the view we expressed on February 4, 1963, that there should be convened a great national conference, not one meeting for a few hours or a couple of days. This conference should study in detail, for whatever period of time is necessary, the means of amending the constitution which would provide for a solution of the problem of adequate representation in the public service for both racial origins in crown corporations, and also examine biculturalism and bilingualism in a comprehensive manner.

We could have obtained votes, Mr. Speaker, by coming out in favour of a commission. They said it would be a wonderful step forward if we were to do that. The attitude then taken by this party, every member of this party in the cabinet, was that such a commission would be destructive to Canada. One has just to read the first report of the commission to know how well founded our views were.

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

Now, a moment ago I mentioned various professors who have been outstanding leaders in the field of political science who have spoken against the amendment. I see before me an item dated March 31 and which refers to the fact that the constitutional expert, a professor of law at the University of Toronto, Dr. Edward McWhinney says the constitution as it stands is clumsy, too wordy. Then, I quote:

In my view, anything that a reasonable national consensus desires can be made to work under the B.N.A. Act. Clumsy and full of unnecessary detail as it is, I still think it is flexible enough to be accommodating to what one wants, and that is the most important thing.

He finally ends up taking the view, as I understand his evidence, that the plan of amendment is a plan that will be a denial of the destiny of this land. It will balkanize our country and place the constitution in a position where, regardless of the changes that must be made in the years ahead, those changes cannot be made. I have no argument against the fact that some of the provinces accepted it. Naturally, when securing extra powers or extra authority, they are not going to turn down that which is given to them. But, sir, the Parliament of Canada is the one institution, and the only institution, that can stand for one Canada, for the maintenance of those things that made this nation possible and for the things that, in the years ahead, will assure the continuing strength of our country.

People say to me that taking that stand will be interpreted as being anti-Quebec. I should like to quote the words of at least two members in this house dealing with stands that were taken while I was prime minister, fully approving of those stands and pointing out that our attitude had been one of full recognition of the equal partnership of two races and also of the rights of other people in Canada who come from various racial origins, of which I am one in part, and which are not going to permit themselves to be placed in a secondary position of Canadian citizenship.

I adopt the words of Sir John A. Macdonald as quoted in "Confederation, Its Preparation and Accomplishments", a really quite remarkable work:

We are a great country and shall become one of the greatest in the universe if we preserve it; we shall sink into insignificance and adversity if we suffer it to be broken. God and nature have made the two Canadas one—let no factious men be allowed to put them asunder.