

disintegrate the empire. People cannot stand indefinitely what they are enduring at present. They are blaming their condition on various things, and one of those things, before long, will be the British connection. For that reason, too, in the interests of our security, our unity, and our inter-commonwealth relations, I would urge most earnestly that until such time as we can carefully discuss the matter throughout the country and know exactly what we are doing we steer clear of a loan council.

Mr. J. S. WOODSWORTH (Winnipeg North Centre): It seems to me that this resolution involves three principles: first of all, the method of amending the British North America Act; second, giving the provinces the right to impose a certain type of indirect taxation, third, giving to the dominion, under certain conditions, control over provincial finances. Undoubtedly, although the measure may not immediately involve anything of great importance it has far-reaching consequences. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe), in introducing the resolution, said that the proposal had no connection with the general question of Canada's right to amend her constitution. In this house we have not in any formal way gone so far as to suggest that Canada had any right to amend her constitution. Last year we considered before a committee of this house the question of the best method of amending the British North America Act, so that in the words of the resolution I then moved:

...while safeguarding the existing rights of racial and religious minorities and legitimate provincial claims to autonomy, the dominion government may be given adequate power to deal effectively with urgent economic problems which are essentially national in scope.

It was found by that committee, which devoted its attention to devising a method, that there was not unanimity of opinion as to what method should be adopted. The committee itself had some difficulty in reaching something like unanimity, but apparently it was blocked by the pressure brought to bear by the different provinces, or perhaps I should say, more correctly, by the refusal of a number of provinces to send in submissions or representations of any kind. So the matter was left open. To-day the minister slides over the real difficulty fairly easily and suggests that in this case, at least, we might bring about the change merely by an address of both houses of parliament. I find myself in a difficult position in criticizing this matter. The minister comes of a race that is said to be logical and consistent in its methods of doing things. I come of

a race that is said to adopt expediency and to muddle through somehow. In this particular instance it would seem that we have exchanged roles, and the minister is going to adopt this particular expediency and so to muddle through in some way while others of us are put into the position of insisting that we should have some sort of logic and consistency in dealing with questions of this kind.

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East): My hon. friend is flattering himself.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I should think the right way to proceed would be to adopt some method of amending the constitution. Of course if we are to adopt the "muddling through" process possibly I should keep very quiet about this measure and let it slip through without much notice. Then, when this particular measure slips through without any general notice being taken, we might be in a better position to slip some other matters through, because, forsooth, this will have created a precedent. Really what I am afraid of is that though a financial measure of this kind may go through, it will not be regarded as a precedent by which we may guide ourselves with regard to other matters of great importance.

The fact is that it is proposed to change the British North America Act fundamentally merely by an address. We are told that representatives of the provinces have been consulted. The provinces themselves have not officially stated that they are willing to have this measure go through. As far as I know the matter has not been before any provincial legislature.

Mr. FINN: Yes, New Brunswick.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I do not think it has been before the provincial legislature of New Brunswick.

Mr. FINN: Yes, the question of amending the British North America Act.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: That is another matter; I am speaking of this particular resolution. As far as I am able to learn it has not been endorsed by any provincial legislature. Here, then, we are proceeding to pass a fundamental amendment to the British North America Act merely by means of an address by the two houses.

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East): That is what my hon. friend has been preaching in the past.