

in the past. I have in my hand sessional paper No. 80, certified to be a copy of order in council P.C. 1135, dated May 12, 1936, and I find it contains this clause:

The minister further states that the said treasury bills of the province of Manitoba have been consolidated into one bill bearing interest at the rate of 4½ per cent per annum and that the total amount less repayments of \$20,090.12, namely \$5,874,037.37, matured May 1, 1936, respecting which the province has requested a renewal.

The minister recommends that under the authority of the Unemployment Relief and Assistance Act, 1936, the dominion grant a renewal of its guarantee of the foregoing treasury bill amounting to \$5,874,037.37 for a period of one year from the first of May, 1936.

Looking at that with the eyes of a layman it seems to me to show definitely that the dominion government has guaranteed—call it what you like, give it any legal definition you like—the debts of one province, and now the government contends that it is necessary to obtain power from Westminster in order to be able to do these very things. That argument appears to lack consistency, and therefore we have every reason for being on our guard. Fear is the mother of safety, and we are compelled to ask why it should be necessary to seek power to extend the powers which the government already has.

As I said before, I cannot make the brilliant plea that was made by the right hon. leader of the opposition, who pointed out that by passing this resolution we would be admitting that we did not possess these powers in the past, or be admitting a sense of inferiority. That is one point I should like hon. gentlemen to consider.

I cannot, of course, go into legal details in connection with this resolution, but I would ask this question: Is it necessary for us in Canada to rush into some agreement without being given adequate reasons for doing so? I admit that at times it might be necessary to amend the constitution of Canada in order that it may better serve the interests of the Canadian people, but I say that such a change should not be made until we have had at least an opportunity of obtaining the opinion of all the people of Canada, who are, after all, deeply concerned in this matter.

Before sitting down I cannot help referring to an incident which occurred yesterday, and to which the Minister of Finance referred today, stating that a communication introduced into the debate yesterday was from an anonymous correspondent. I simply want to leave this impression on the house: I know definitely that that letter was in existence. The extract put upon Hansard has been withdrawn, but I do not wish any reflections to be cast upon the leader of this party (Mr.

Blackmore) by people who suggest that he was trying to bring before the house something that did not really exist at all. It did exist, and it was brought before the house in good faith. That is all I have to say so far as that matter is concerned.

In conclusion I would ask, if we are going to amend the constitution of Canada to-day for what appears to the Minister of Finance to be good and sufficient reasons, might not the day come when the minorities in this dominion, who have been guaranteed certain rights under the British North America Act, might not find themselves in the same position that certain people find themselves in to-day? That must be left to the patriotism of those who are the government. All I suggest is that we do not know what the future holds. I sound this note of warning against trifling with such an important document as the British North America Act. To my mind there are serious objections—and I am speaking not from the point of view of a partisan but as a Canadian—to proceeding with this legislation, and I trust that the views I have put forward will receive consideration by hon. members of the house.

Hon. H. H. STEVENS (Kootenay East): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say just a few words in regard to this resolution which is of very grave importance, because otherwise my silence might be misinterpreted or misunderstood. Ever since this resolution appeared on the order paper I have been baffled as to the need of at least three of its provisions. I shall deal with the four sections of the resolution in a moment. But first let me say this, and I am induced to say it by some of the observations made by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dunning): When he was speaking he asked in an impassioned manner: Where are we going? He insisted that we should ask ourselves where this was going to end, referring to loans to provinces and the present day method, or the method of recent times, of dealing with the monetary relations between the provinces and the dominion. Then he added this: The dominion will soon be the majority creditor of the provinces, and he insisted that that condition, which he suggested we were rapidly approaching, was so serious that it called for definite and serious treatment at the hands of parliament. I asked myself this question: Assuming that the Minister of Finance was quite right in his diagnosis of the situation, does this resolution as it now stands before us adequately meet the situation which he so graphically described.

In the first place I would say to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe) in particular and to the right hon. the Prime