

*The Address—Mr. Baldwin*

In the first instance, surely these are matters which deeply concern the average Canadian. Surely he is entitled to participate in the discussion, to hear what is being said and to indicate whether in his view the federal or the provincial government is the instrument he would select to exercise jurisdiction in certain fields. These might include educational television, about which we have heard much lately, as well as external affairs, air and water pollution and assistance to urban development. The average person living in this country, regardless of whether he is a resident of Quebec, Ontario or some other province, is deeply and continually concerned about these issues. He may decide in his judgment that these things could best be handled by the provincial governments or by the federal government. It seems to me that what the government is doing by referring this matter to its technical committee is refusing to bring it into the open for discussion, and this is not consistent with the idea of hearing the views of the majority of the people. I suggest this idea of "big brother knows best" is a most aggravating and arrogant assumption.

I feel I am entitled to make these comments because my position has been consistent. I first raised this matter in this party four or five years ago and have dealt with it in speeches in the house. I placed a resolution on the order paper on March 13, 1964, reading as follows:

That, in the opinion of this house, the government should forthwith consult with the provinces for the purpose of establishing a centennial constitutional conference to consist of a given number of Senators and Members of Parliament and an equal number of members of all of the provincial legislatures; which conference should meet in Ottawa and in all of the provinces to consider amending the British North America Act in accordance with the experiences of the past, the exigencies of the present and the needs of the future, including in such consideration the determination of those subject matters which are logically suited for general federal-provincial consultation—

That was well over three years ago and no attention was paid to it at that time. I placed another resolution on the order paper, in somewhat different terms but dealing with the same subject matter, which was debated on February 14, 1966.

If such a conference has been initiated in 1963, 1964, 1965 or even 1966 we might at this time be crowning the results in this year of our centennial celebrations by a new and useful approach in legislative form to our federal-provincial difficulties. Instead we see the problems magnified and deepening, dividing our country regionally and, unfortunately at

times, racially. I can only say that the government's offer is too little and too late.

I cannot support the subamendment offered by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas), without quarreling with its content. That attitude is consistent with the position I am now taking in that it is premature in the same way that the government's proposal is premature at this time. The result will be to bury this matter by referring it for consideration by a few technical experts. The first thing that is essential as a condition precedent is a thorough and wide-ranging public discussion on all levels.

• (4:30 p.m.)

After those words of criticism I am glad to say a word or two in commendation of the government for its proposal in the speech from the throne to consider new incentives for industrial, regional and economic planning in the north. I came into this house over nine years ago primarily to push the government into projects of this kind and became immediately concerned with the construction of a railway to Pine Point, which had been talked about for almost 40 years but which no government had ever looked at. The issue involved not only the railroad but the route, and it ultimately proved necessary to have the then government set up a royal commission to consider this issue. Despite opposition which came from all sides of the house and from many of the larger companies and industries involved, the former government was persuaded ultimately to select a route through Peace River and the railway was launched and built. Because it was built, and was built on the right route, the costs of construction were decreased, the time for building was lessened and the great mine at Pine Point came into production, other mines and mineral fields were discovered, and great timber resources which we knew of were opened and are now producing large quantities of lumber and plywood. The construction of the railroad and the collateral improvement of the Mackenzie by the government of Alberta and the federal government accelerated the exploration and discovery of oil and gas in the huge Rainbow lake fields, and thousands of people came into the country. Exploration was stepped up in the Northwest Territories. This was all done through a partnership arrangement among the government, the railway company and industry. To the extent to which the present government will take this as a model in their development of the north, they can count on my completely non-partisan support.