

*The Address—Mr. Macquarrie*

wants to wrap an even heavier cloak of secrecy around dominion-provincial discussions. I think that is one of the things that has been troubling this country in recent years and months; far too many things are discussed behind closed doors by dominion and provincial governments. We here and in the legislatures of the provinces, know nothing about them until a *fait accompli* is presented.

I like the suggestion that has been outlined by our amendment and set forth as a practical plan of action by Premier Robarts. He is able to do something about it. In this house our voice will not be heeded. Happily, however, Premier Robarts in his position of executive authority can take an initiative. He has called his confederation of tomorrow conference and has made preparation for it. I would suggest that the documents prepared at his request by some of the leading constitutional experts in Canada make the finest contribution I have seen in many, many years to this discussion of federal-provincial matters and constitutional problems generally.

I like Premier Robarts' suggestion, not only because it has followed careful preparation, the kind of preparation that we called for time and time again when we asked that a committee be set up to look into this matter—how often have we pleaded for that—but because he plans a conference in which the public, who after all have some interest in this matter, will be aware of the discussions and decisions. I should like to quote from the *Globe and Mail* of today:

Mr. Pearson, who prefers to approach constitutional change in private, so that the people do not know their future until it is upon them, may be dismayed at the thought of a frank and open discussion, however friendly. Perhaps it should be pointed out that while this may not be the way of diplomats, it is the way of democracies.

That is a very, very fine appraisal of a very, very important matter. I hope that the government—perhaps it is a faint hope—will

not be content with putting forward some gesture which may seem to take the edge off an extremely good suggestion that has been coming from the opposition, or an initiative that has been taken by the premier of a province. I hope the government will seriously, regardless of the source from which the idea came, take every means possible to bring men of good will and legislators from the provinces together, and with the spirit of 1867 but the problems of 1967 will use the techniques that are the tools of the politician—free, frank and full discussion. I have faith in politicians. It is so easy to denigrate them. We are used to being caricatures. But as a very distinguished Canadian said not long ago, it was the politicians who made this country. Surely it is the politicians who can make it greater.

But let us have an initiative. Let us say that we must take a full look at our constitution. Let us draw in all the best ideas from the provinces, and let us start it right away. This is my appeal to the government. There is nothing better we could do for our country than improve its constitutional apparatus. I know that from this part of the house there will be no lack of co-operation. I think the record of the many things that have been said in recent years indicates that there will be no lack of valuable and sound ideas. Let us all get together. Let us have a committee of this house study the problem. Let the hand of Premier Robarts receive the handshake that was mentioned the other day; but more than a handshake. Let us not fret about whose idea this was. Let us participate fully in Premier Robarts' conference and move on to newer ideas and fresher initiatives. Perhaps if that is the result we can forgive all the prolixity of the speech from the throne.

At six o'clock the house adjourned, without question put, pursuant to standing order.