

*Dominion-Provincial Conference*

the conference in advance of these elections has been made obvious by the fact that in two of the provinces where elections have been held, the governments have changed in consequence of the elections. The election in New Brunswick will not be over before the end of the present month. And, I might add, it has been publicly announced that the new government in Quebec will not take office until August 30. Without doubt the new government will wish to have time to prepare for a dominion-provincial conference. It is clear, therefore, that a conference could not be held suitably to all the provinces before October at the earliest.

It is desirable above all else that the conference when held should be a success. Canada cannot afford a repetition of what occurred at the last dominion-provincial conference. The whole purpose of the conference is to work out solutions of many difficult problems, which solutions will have to be implemented by the governments concerned.

It is obviously desirable that the conference should, if possible, be held between the governments that may be in office during the next few years, the governments that will be living together and will have to work together.

So far as the provinces are concerned, once the New Brunswick election is over, there will have been an election in six of the nine provinces since August of last year. In the remaining three, the elections were in 1941 and no further election is required by law in any of the three before 1946.

The date of the federal election is necessarily uncertain, but as I have repeatedly said, once the war is over, it may come at any time. It will not, however, be delayed on any account beyond the legal term of the present parliament. If we are to believe what we are told by our political opponents, it may be a C.C.F. government, or a Progressive-Conservative government, or some other government than the present one which will be in office after the general election. While I myself do not entertain any of these views, clearly all uncertainty should be removed as to the government which will have to carry out, on behalf of the dominion, the important decisions of the conference before those decisions themselves are reached. In no other way can there be a guarantee that the decisions of the conference will be effective.

There is, however, an additional reason why, if the conference itself is to be a success, it should be held only after a general election. What above all else is required to make the conference a success is a cooperative attitude

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

on the part of all governments concerned. How far that attitude has thus far been in evidence may be judged from the correspondence which there has been since the conference itself was proposed.

The correspondence up to March 21 was tabled on March 31. To-night I have tabled the remainder of the correspondence to date. Perhaps the house will agree to have the entire correspondence printed as an addendum to the *Votes and Proceedings* of to-day.

Apart from the correspondence, which speaks for itself, I must draw the attention of hon. members to a statement made by the Premier of Ontario in a broadcast on the evening of July 21, a report of which was published on the following day. I quote from the *Toronto Globe and Mail* of July 22, 1944, a paragraph setting forth, within quotation marks, the statement which Mr. Drew made in his broadcast. It is as follows:

My one ambition in the political field outside of Ontario is to see an end as soon as possible of the weak and incompetent government in power at Ottawa to-day, and to assist in every way I can to assure that John Bracken is the next Prime Minister of Canada.

Such being the declared aim of the Premier of Ontario, it must be apparent that any conference held before a federal election would have little or no hope of success, and would almost certainly prejudice the success of a subsequent conference.

Preparations for the dominion-provincial conference can and will be continued so that it will be possible to have the conference held immediately following a general election.

Mr. GRAYDON: May I suggest to the Prime Minister—and I do not like at the end of the session to inject anything that is not strictly harmonious—that I think what he has explained as the reason for not holding the dominion-provincial conference may properly be described as an excuse instead.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I am sorry my hon. friend has found it necessary to be facetious at the last moment of this part of the session; but may I assure him that the facts speak for themselves. I have carefully refrained from making any comment. I have allowed the record to stand, as I think it will, on its own.

Mr. GRAYDON: You could not have said much more with respect to the premier of Ontario.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: No; he said all that was necessary.

Mr. GRAYDON: So did you.