

The Address—Mr. Fleming

mentality that is to characterize this government in its continued relations with the provinces.

We had to listen to the Prime Minister on Monday last say, in effect, that he had neither the time nor the patience to attend further dominion-provincial conferences.

Mr. Cruickshank: He never said any such thing.

Mr. Fleming: The Prime Minister undertook to tell this house how much he objected to having to return from an international conference several years ago to attend one of these dominion-provincial conferences. He went on to complain about that and to say that, in effect, the method of general dominion-provincial conferences was futile. It could result in nothing of benefit to Canada in the future. If we are to take his words at face value, apparently as long as this government is in office—and that will not be long, since its days are numbered—there will be no more dominion-provincial conferences. In other words, the method of general conference which brought about confederation has no place in the thinking of the government which clings to the treasury benches opposite. The Prime Minister has repudiated the method of open, general conference. He has repudiated the confederation method of dealing with problems arising within the framework of confederation. He has not the time, he has not the patience for any more general dominion-provincial conferences.

Mr. Speaker, none of us is going to say Canada should not be represented at international conferences where Canadian interests are involved. I am sure no one is going to say that, because many of these conferences do not succeed in their purpose, they should not be held. The Prime Minister of Canada has reached the point now in his political thinking that it is all very well to have international conferences whether they succeed or whether they do not, but in the matter of Canadian conferences—dominion-provincial conferences where Canadians representing the federal authority on the one hand and the provinces on the other might be expected to sit down and discuss problems of mutual concern—he says there is not to be any place in his time or in his patience for conferences of that kind. Where on earth, Mr. Speaker, is the consistency in the Prime Minister who complains that he was brought back from an international conference to attend a dominion-provincial conference?

I am very proud that my leader has continued to call, as he has, without abatement from the time the government sabotaged the last dominion-provincial conference in May 1946, for the resumption of the general

[Mr. Fleming.]

dominion-provincial conferences. The people who are responsible for the fact there has been no resumption of the conferences are the people who are occupying those treasury benches. Their days are numbered, however, and it is a happy thing for Canada that is so.

I turn, not to another subject, but to another phase of the government's attitude towards the constitution of this country. In his remarks last Friday and Monday the Prime Minister exhibited tender spots. I was particularly interested in what he had to say on Monday concerning an incident which transpired in this house on the 18th of June, 1946, when, as Minister of Justice, he was spokesman for the government in the debate on an address which sought an amendment to the British North America Act from the parliament at Westminster concerning the redistribution of representation in this chamber.

The Prime Minister revealed a tender spot and went on to complain very bitterly about the attention paid to his words on that occasion. What were those words? What was the mentality those words revealed? What was the attitude towards the constitution of this country and towards the language rights enshrined in section 133 of the British North America Act which was discussed at that time? I found it most significant, Mr. Speaker, that on Monday the Prime Minister was very selective in his quotation from what he said on June 18, 1946. Of course, he quoted the passages in which he quoted from an exchange of remarks between King Agrippa and Festus and Paul, and some of the passages which followed on page 2621 of *Hansard*, 1946.

For some reason or other, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister failed, however, to quote the words which immediately preceded the words he quoted at some length and which are the nub and kernel of everything he said on that occasion and which give full justification to what has since been said in this chamber and in all parts of Canada, particularly the province of Quebec, concerning his speech. These words which the Prime Minister failed to quote, Mr. Speaker, are found on the same page of the 1946 *Hansard* as that to which I have referred. At that point he was dealing expressly with section 133 of the British North America Act and with a question which had been asked of him by the hon. member for Calgary West (Mr. Smith) as to whether, in his opinion, parliament was free to seek an amendment of the constitution as long as the subject did not fall within section 92 of the British North America Act. He answered as follows:

Can that—