

The Budget—Mr. Fulton

Mr. Abbott: We would not want to interrupt. Go right ahead.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fulton: The Prime Minister of Canada, speaking in the course of the conference in September, 1950, said these words as reported at page 58 of the proceedings:

I do not want to imply that what has already been decided here has the importance of Magna Carta, but I think we have all greatly benefited from the evidence and realization that all those attending this conference were sincerely desirous of doing everything within each one's power to arrive at the goal of settling in Canada matters of interest to the Canadian public, and that we are determined that those matters will ultimately be settled through institutions responsible to the Canadian public.

I suggest that the institution responsible to the Canadian public is this government, but in the last few days, weeks or months, indeed, years since 1950, it has not shown any very great sense of responsibility in this matter. The premier of Ontario discussed the progress made in the course of the conference, the purpose of which was to settle matters as between the dominion and the provinces. He was referring to the press statement authorized by the conference and he said:

As the press statement sets out, we have made very substantial progress. We are going to make more progress. I think I should express appreciation for the attorneys general committee which has met and which is going to meet again. That committee did a valuable job indeed. We now have clarified a great many things and I do not think it is breaking any secret to say that we have enlarged the scope and authority of that committee. I feel quite sure that when we meet next December we will make, not only more progress, but we will achieve the objective to which we have set ourselves, the objective of finding a way to amend our constitution in Canada in a manner which will protect all the minorities, all the races and all the interests in this great country of ours.

These, sir, are the words of the premier of Ontario referring to the press statement submitted by the Prime Minister of this country not quite four years ago regarding a conference called under the aegis of the dominion government, a conference which has not met since although they appointed a continuing committee under the chairmanship of the Minister of Justice who has done nothing more than find reasons and excuses for that conference not to meet again.

Then we have the words of the gentleman whom we were pleased to honour in tributes paid in this house today discussing the progress made in this conference. At page 60 of the report of the proceedings we find that the Hon. Angus L. Macdonald said:

However, we are on the right road. We have achieved certain things here. The continuing committee of attorneys general, with the Minister of

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Justice as chairman, will, I am sure, advance still further along that road and when the next plenary conference meets in December I feel sure we shall make still further progress.

I ask the Minister of Justice to ask himself, in the light of the remarks of that splendid Canadian voice which is now stilled, what thought he has given to making still further progress along that road? I hope the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson), who was going to repatriate the constitution of Canada, and set the badge of his great achievement upon the liberation of these things, will say soon in the course of this debate what plans he has in mind for resolving this impasse for which, next to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance he, perhaps more than any other gentleman opposite, is responsible.

Then we have the premier of New Brunswick who said this, as reported at page 61:

We have had much to inspire us and there have also been things that have tended to sober us. What I mean is that we all realize that the job which was undertaken last January by this conference is going to be done some time.

Perhaps the premier of New Brunswick did not realize how prophetic those last two words were. He went on to say:

If we of this generation of public men do not do this job, the men of some other generation are going to do it. It is somewhat of a challenge to us to rise to the levels of statesmanship which are necessary to accomplish a task so great.

I suggest to you, sir, that those words, in the light of the sober realization of the facts of the situation today carry with them their own accusation of the present government which, by an obstructionist and obstinate course, has set itself against the making of further progress along those lines.

Then the premier of New Brunswick again echoed the words of the premier of Nova Scotia when, in his closing paragraph he said:

I think also, Mr. Prime Minister, that we have profited much from the guidance and the way in which you have carried out the important duties of your position as chairman of the conference. In closing I want to add my belief to the confidence that others have expressed that we are going to succeed in this work in which we are engaged. I know I leave here with a feeling that in the not distant future we will reach the goal which we all have in prospect.

Then the premier of Manitoba had these encouraging words—and hon. members will keep in mind that this was not quite four years ago—

As far as the work of the conference is concerned I know that you, Mr. Chairman, and all of us recognize that it would be unrealistic and even untruthful to pretend that we have accomplished everything that we set out to do. On the other hand, and as has been mentioned earlier, we have taken long strides toward reaching our objective.