

The debate thus far, to which I have listened with great care, has revealed the fact that the Liberal party and its spokesmen through the years have been anything but consistent in matters affecting amendments of the British North America Act. They have shifted their ground to suit special occasions as they arose. That is quite evident from the information given by a number of speakers this afternoon. However, it seems to me that the constitutional issue has arisen as the battleground in this debate and therefore I should like to state just where I stand with respect to that issue.

Social Crediters have always been known as decentralizers. They have always been consistent in arguing for, speaking for and pleading for decentralization, and they have had good reasons for that. It has not been for lack of vision—not at all; in fact it has been the contrary. However changeable has been their past, it now appears that the C.C.F. and the Liberals are centralizers, and in saying that I do not believe I am saying anything they would disagree with.

Not only that, but Social Crediters have always been consistent in their stand with regard to the British North America Act. We have fought to prevent hasty and radical changes to that act. We have fought constantly to preserve every safeguard that we had against hasty and radical changes to our constitution. We have not fought change, for we know that there is no more inexorable law than the law of change and the need for change and progress. I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that when the Rowell-Sirois commission was planned, the Alberta government, the only Social Credit government in the world, headed by the late Premier Aberhart, requested the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Mackenzie King) to set up for that commission an agenda which would include more than just financial references. He went so far as to suggest that there be added to the agenda for full discussion amongst the provinces and the dominion the matter of amendments of the British North America Act and that a procedure be arrived at by which those amendments would safely be made. But that was refused. The Prime Minister insisted upon the reference of the commission being purely a financial reference. Later, Premier Manning of Alberta wrote to the Prime Minister suggesting that the agenda for the coming dominion-provincial conference provide for a discussion of amendments of the British North America Act. He felt that any proposals for changes in the act should be brought before the provinces while they were in conference.

Social Crediters have always held the view that confederation was a matter which arose, or was supposed to have arisen, out of the

action of the provinces and that whatever powers were given to the central government were conferred upon it by the provinces. Therefore we have contended that there should be no material alteration in the British North America Act without consultation with the provinces.

I have always considered it to be the greatest responsibility of the members of the House of Commons to confirm every Canadian in his own rights. This can best be accomplished by decentralization. Centralization of power will in time destroy any possibility of so confirming every man in his rights, whether it be in Quebec, Alberta, British Columbia or any other province. There has been for some years a strong movement for centralization of power in this country and, I might say, also elsewhere throughout the world. In fact, some elements have spread throughout the land the doctrine of the inevitability of centralization. Social Crediters have done their best to combat that doctrine, which we contend is inimical to the interests of the individual citizens of Canada. The best guarantee we have against complete centralization of power in Canada is the constitution, the British North America Act. The best guarantee that the rights of minorities will always be respected is the spirit of that same constitution. The best assurance that the constitution will remain a safeguard of the rights of minorities would be to lay down, once and for all, a procedure for amending the constitution, a procedure which breathes the very spirit in which the constitution was originally framed. The foundation of that procedure, ought, in my judgment, to be consultation with the provinces.

Mr. BRIDGES: May I ask the hon. member a question? What is the next procedure if the provinces do not agree?

Mr. LOW: I do not see how we could possibly argue that measures brought before this house should be passed by a majority vote unless we were also prepared to arrange that at such times as consultation on the part of the provinces is sought, the same should be had.

Mr. BRIDGES: May I ask the hon. member one more question? I promise that I will not ask another. Is it his view that no amendment of any kind of any section of the British North America Act should be made without the unanimous consent of the provinces?

Mr. LOW: I have not said anything of the sort. I did say before that no material amendments of the British North America Act should be sought without consultation with the