

situation be suspended and that one of its essential provisions be set aside at least for a time.

The question gave rise to a long debate, a debate in which several hon. members who are to-day opposing the resolution under consideration took part. What was the attitude of the official opposition? What was the attitude of our opponents then led by the hon. member for Peel (Mr. Graydon)? All without exception voted in support of the measure and consequently went on record in favour of this essential modification of our constitution. Did none of them feel the scruples that seem to beset them to-day? Did none of those members of the opposition who to-day object to the resolution protest at that time because the provinces were not consulted? Did any of them raise the objection that the provinces had to consent to a suspension of the application of the terms of our constitution?

What was the attitude of the hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker) who to-day claims to be the champion of the rights of the provinces? What did the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Green) say, who to-day will claim to want to prevent the provinces from suffering an injustice? What were the views expressed by the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. MacNicol), whom the autonomy of the provinces, especially that of Ontario, I suppose, seems to concern so deeply to-day? Silence. Not one word from them was heard during the debate in July, 1943.

What stand did the house leader of the opposition, the hon. member for Peel, take in the matter? Speaking for his party, he then went on record in support of the resolution and we did not hear him voice a single word of protest over the failure to consult the provinces or the provincial parliaments.

Was it because at that time the resolution asked that the constitution be altered but on that occasion so as to defer redistribution? Was it because, when that first resolution was introduced, certain aggrieved provinces were prevented from securing justice and others were allowed to avail themselves of a situation contrary to equity and to the very text of the constitution? Was it planned in 1943 to deny for a time to democracy its sovereign rights, only to refuse again in 1946 to acknowledge them? Was it planned at that moment to postpone redistribution because of a state of war, or was it simply because the sponsors of the resolution preferred to take delight in illegality and injustice? I believe there is cause to be astonished at the attitude of our opponents who to-day adopt a course

from which they refrained yesterday when the situation was the same but the goal sought was different.

Amidst these contradictory attitudes, these dilatory tactics, these fiery speeches on the autonomy of the provinces, what becomes of the great principle on which the resolution now under consideration is founded? All seem to recognize the truth it holds; all want to see the provinces treated justly, but the attitude of several runs counter to their statements and to their so-called wishes.

I revert for a moment to the position taken by our opponents in 1943. Not only did none of them then declare that the provinces should be consulted as a preliminary step; not even one objected against the application of section 51 being postponed. On the contrary, all those who took part in the debate at the time declared themselves in favour of redistribution. This often happens elsewhere; one subscribes readily to a fundamental truth when one knows beforehand that it will not be put into practice. Redistribution and an equitable division of representation in each province were supported at the time with great emphasis. But this was no doubt owing to the fact that it was known at the time that the government could not put the measure into effect.

Here is what the hon. member for Peel stated on July 5, 1943, on behalf of the party which he then led in the house. I find his words at page 4343 of *Hansard* for that year:

We are anxious as a party that no provinces shall have any just grievance in respect to redistribution. Having that in mind, we base our support of this resolution upon the one ground that this is a war-time period when abnormal conditions exist. Because of the war and because of these conditions we feel that it is part of our duty to the nation at large to support the present resolution.

The hon. member—and I underline 'his words—stated that the one ground on which he agreed to delay redistribution was the existence of a state of war. He then agreed to delay redistribution, notwithstanding the constitution and notwithstanding the assent of the provinces. He did not want the provinces to suffer any injustice in this respect, he said, and the existence of a state of war was the one ground why he agreed to defer redistribution. To-day, if he finds himself called upon to express his views in line with his statement, he will reaffirm his attitude but this time he will find a way of putting off that which he claims to be his wish.

For my part, I understand differently the importance of the principle the government asks us to sanction by the present resolution. This principle, as I have already said, is basic to our parliamentary system. That parlia-