

it had enjoyed for many years before that, and I do not hesitate to say that a great deal of the credit, in fact most of the credit is due to the advocacy and influence and eloquence and great vision of the late lamented Sir Wilfrid Laurier, which attracted the attention of the diplomats of Great Britain. But he was always careful to keep within the constitution of Canada, and every one of his efforts resulted in an advancement rather than a retrograde movement in Canada's autonomy. I claim that the result of the efforts of the Canadian representatives at the Peace Conference at Versailles is a retrograde movement rather than an advance, and furthermore, it is against the constitution. Truly the wise and learned Minister of Public Works (Mr. Sifton) has said that the people have to be consulted before any change is made in the constitution. He says, however, that when the change is for the better it is not necessary to consult the people, but only when the change is for the worse. I am not disposed to accuse the Minister of Public Works of intending to impose upon Canada a worse condition than it enjoyed before, but I say that the change is for the worse, and that whether a change is for the better or worse it can only be made with the consent of the people of Canada. I repeat, I do not think the change in our constitution has been for the better. Up to to-day we were not a nation in the full sense of the word. Sentimentally we have made great progress as a nation or as one of the nations of the Commonwealth, if you prefer that phrase, but we have not come to the point of being a distinct and separate nation of the British Empire. If we were a separate and distinct nation we would have our own King or president. If we are a separate nation, I ask you who is our king or president? You may say that we belong to the British Empire and that we are just as independent as if we were a separate nation. No Canadian from the Atlantic to the Pacific wishes more to remain under the protection of the British flag than the modest member for Gloucester (Mr. Turgeon), but in the meantime we are not a nation. Those who are so anxious to call us a nation ought to take advantage of the presence of the Prince of Wales in this country and ask him if he will not be crowned king of Canada.

We have not the power to declare war or make peace, and no people is an independent nation unless it has this power. When we were at war we no doubt eagerly wished for peace, but Canada was power-

[Mr. Turgeon.]

less to declare peace even if she considered it in her best interests to do so. If ever there was an obligation to consult the people on any question it certainly was in connection with this very important matter, and in view of the sacrifices which the people of the country generally have borne, and particularly the noble part which has been played by a section of the community amounting to twenty-five or thirty per cent of the population, I think it would be only constitutional and right to ascertain the views of the people of Canada on this subject. Some 300,000 of our men, after making every possible sacrifice, are to-day returning, and together with their families and dependents they form probably one-third of the population of the country, and they should have some right to be consulted in regard to a radical change in the constitution of Canada by which its voluntary efforts, through love and admiration of the British Crown, will give place to a dictation by a council of nine representing different nations of the world. This movement is altogether unconstitutional, and I repeat that if ever there was a time when the people should have been consulted it is at this very moment; for by the change which is proposed the soldiers themselves may be called upon to fight without an opportunity of expressing their willingness or otherwise, simply at the dictation of a council and not at the request of Great Britain. In the past we have served voluntarily and have not even waited for Britain to seek our participation. As soon as the war was declared in 1914 the Prime Minister volunteered the services of Canada to the Empire, and the leader of the Opposition of that day immediately joined in tendering his hearty co-operation and that of his followers in order to help the Mother Country as much as possible to maintain the welfare of humanity, liberty and democracy. By this Treaty, however, it may happen that we may have to fight even against Great Britain herself. The Article distinctly lays it down, and the possibility has been demonstrated by previous speakers. The council of nine may call other nations to arms against Britain, should Britain find it expedient to declare war on some other country, and our soldiers might be summoned to respond not to an invitation of the Mother Country, as in days gone by, but to the dictation of a council of nine administering the affairs of the world.

With these few remarks I shall conclude, hoping that the League of Nations may succeed in bringing about a condition that has