

The Budget—Mr. Drew

called to discuss the constitution. It is still in the air, too. As far as any of these matters are concerned, this government apparently believes that all it has to do is to call a conference, make a series of statements in regard to which they have not the basic facts, leave the whole thing in the air and then employ their expensive propaganda machine to assert that those on the other side disagreed with what they said. That has been the whole course of these proceedings.

Since this impression has been so assiduously disseminated, Mr. Speaker, and carried forward even today, that in my capacity as premier of Ontario I was an unwilling attendant at those conferences, I am going to place on record something that has not previously been placed there. I trust that the minister is unaware of this because his conduct would be surprising if he were aware of the fact that the initiation of that conference started by a request communicated on behalf of the government of Ontario, over my signature in January, 1944. I am going to place that on the record. Of course the Minister of Justice knows this because he received a copy of the letter afterwards.

Mr. Ferguson: He may still not know it.

Mr. Drew: Well, I am going to remind him. On January 6, 1944, as premier of Ontario, I wrote the following letter:

Right Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King,
Prime Minister of Canada,
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ontario.

Dear Mr. King:

Since returning to my office, I have had the opportunity to read a number of speeches made by dominion cabinet ministers referring to plans that are being made for post-war employment and reconstruction. I find that in most cases they refer to fields of activity which would ordinarily be under the exclusive jurisdiction of the provincial governments.

An hon. Member: Family allowances.

Mr. Drew: The mythology still persists.

I need not say that we are most anxious to co-operate in every practical measure which will assure effective post-war planning and the prompt rehabilitation of the members of our armed forces. I believe it is extremely important, however, that where it will be necessary to obtain the agreement of the provincial governments in regard to the joint occupation of fields of legislation ordinarily under their exclusive jurisdiction, there should be previous discussion so that any measures introduced will be on a basis agreed upon in advance.

At present, there are agreements in regard to health and education awaiting adjustment between the dominion and provincial governments. I believe that it is very difficult to deal with these or with any other similar agreements until we have reached some understanding in regard to the present and future constitutional relationship of the various governments.

I would therefore urge that a dominion-provincial conference be called at the earliest possible date to consider the broad question of post-war planning

and reconstruction. Not only is this necessary for the purpose of determining the basis upon which the dominion and the provincial governments will co-operate, but it is also necessary for the purpose of considering the subject of taxation in relation to these measures.

I believe that it is of the utmost importance that such a conference be held before any measures are introduced either in the dominion parliament or the provincial legislatures, which call for ultimate agreement between the dominion and the provincial governments. We will be prepared to send representatives to a conference of this nature at such time as will be convenient to you, but I do urge that the conference be held at the earliest possible date.

Yours sincerely,

To that, Mr. Speaker, I received the following reply on January 13, 1944, from Mr. King.

Hon. George A. Drew, M.L.A.,
Premier of Ontario,
Toronto, Ontario.

My dear Premier:

I wish to acknowledge your letter of January 6, regarding the calling of a dominion-provincial conference to consider questions of post-war employment, reconstruction and the financial relationships between the dominion and the provinces.

At the close of the dominion-provincial conference on January 15, 1941, I indicated that my colleagues and I would be ready to meet the provincial governments at any time they were generally agreed that a further conference would be in the national interest.

I am pleased to note from your letter that the province of Ontario is prepared to take part in such a conference at the earliest possible date. By direction of the government, the clerk of the privy council is today sending a copy of your communication to the premiers of the other provinces, with a request for an early expression of their views as to the holding of a dominion-provincial conference.

Yours sincerely,

W. L. Mackenzie King.

There was the beginning of the whole exchange of discussion that led up to that conference. Mr. King had no hesitation in saying that he had forwarded the letter I had sent to him as the basis of suggestion to the other premiers, and upon that basis the conclusions of the suggestions were brought together which were then followed up at a later time, and we kept pressing for a conference throughout a great many communications, copies of which I have in my hand, up until the time that the conference was finally called on August 6, 1945. That letter was the basis of the whole agenda, and it will be recalled that the name used for the conference was the conference on reconstruction, which was the name suggested in my letter to Mr. King at that time.

I do think it is about time that we should be able to discuss these things without the suggestion that these proposals were rejected or otherwise. There is the *Hansard*