

*Supply—Finance*

necessary to assure their maintenance and progress. Nevertheless, it was decided to leave to the provinces absolute authority in all matters relating to education.

The province of Quebec, which is in law and in fact the legal and political environment of French Canadians, must jealously preserve those rights, granted to it by the British North America Act, to administer its property and exercise those privileges which have been guaranteed to us by our national charter.

Any infringement of the autonomy of the province of Quebec is a breach of the contract made between the two great races in this country at the time of confederation.

If in the British North America Act, section 92, subsection 13 we may read the words "property and civil rights" . . . in the province, it was because the only object in view was to safeguard the institutions and the peculiar customs of Quebec which is not and cannot be a province just like the others.

On page 35 of volume I of the report of the royal commission on dominion-provincial relations, the following words may be found:

The case of Quebec in our federation is in fact peculiar. In every province, Quebec excepted, English civil law is in effect. Every province, save Quebec and Newfoundland, has divorce courts. Every province, except Quebec and Newfoundland has a non-denominational system of public schools. Every province with the exception of Quebec has one single official language, English. Quebec alone has a legislative council. Finally, Quebec alone has a non English-speaking majority, the French-Canadian group.

On the 24th of November 1871, Sir Wilfrid Laurier stated:

It is a historical fact that the federative form of government was adopted only to conserve to Quebec the exceptional and unique position which she occupied upon the American continent.

Lord Carnarvon, who has been called the sponsor of the British North America Act, stated in the House of Lords:

Lower Canada, too, is jealous, as she is deservedly proud, of her ancestral customs and traditions; she is wedded to her peculiar institutions, and will enter this union only upon the distinct understanding that she retains them.

Another great Liberal chief, Honoré Mercier, in a speech at the legislative assembly on April 7, 1884, stated:

The frequent intrusions of the federal parliament upon provincial prerogatives constitute a permanent threat to the provinces.

Mr. Chairman, centralization, whether administrative or political, interferes with the normal development of a state, and is contrary to the very interests of that state and of the people within it. For instance, the

problem of education must be settled at the level where it occurs, and at which it can be solved in the best interests of the people.

Because our religious, cultural and national traditions differ from those of other provinces, because the Canadian constitution, which is above the central power, clearly recognizes that fact, the Ottawa government is duty bound to respect those traditions and to let the Quebec provincial government safeguard them in their integrity.

Now then, such traditions, customs and way of life are preserved to a great extent by our universities and our teaching institutions.

We must therefore see to it that the revenue required for carrying out functions so vitally important to our race be so distributed that the provinces be able to carry out their duty and that there be no substitution to them in the exercise of some of their functions.

The central government has no right to do indirectly what the constitution clearly prohibits.

There should be no disruption nor weakening of the political structure on which the French-Canadian culture is based.

If Ottawa has money to give away, if every year it accumulates enormous surpluses, it is because federal taxes are too high.

Let the provinces and municipalities resume the fields of taxation which belong to them, and the problem of assistance to universities will be solved by the authorities properly constituted for that purpose.

Ottawa has no right to collect taxes for purposes which are not a responsibility of the federal government.

When Ottawa levies taxes for the purpose of making grants to universities, it violates the constitution because it interferes in a field which is under provincial jurisdiction and therefore outside its own jurisdiction.

It was chiefly on the occasion of the last war that the central government consolidated its control over sources of revenue. It did so in an unfair and dishonest way. It deliberately misled the provinces when, in 1942, it promised that tax agreements would be temporary and would be revoked as soon as the war ended. In 1947, under direct threat, provincial governments were forced by Ottawa to renew tax agreements for another five years. The same thing happened again in 1952.

The then minister of finance, in high-sounding and solemn statements, declared that the provinces were absolutely free to accept or refuse federal proposals. He was lying shamelessly.