

Newfoundland

people during the last depression, then we shall face difficulties which will require real statesmanship. Up to the present time, no federal government has shown any sign of adopting any adequate safeguards against depression.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, it will be found that another depression is the thing that is worrying the provinces. The provinces are concerned about how they will manage their affairs during a period of depression. Look at what happened to the provinces during the last depression. Even the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, with their vast amount of industrialization, became impoverished to a painful degree. The four western provinces and the three maritime provinces were reduced to the point of extreme poverty. Prices fell, but debts remained. Falling prices caused debts which were owing before the depression to almost treble, but the debts remained and the interest was still charged. Men were dispossessed from their farms and homes. All this time the dominion government sat supinely, disregarding the whole matter.

As soon as Premier Aberhart was elected in the province of Alberta and began to defend the homes of the people in that province, he encountered opposition from this federal government. It is easy to state that such a thing will not occur again. Furthermore, all during that depression adverse freight rates continued to place a most iniquitous burden on the western provinces and the maritimes. Nothing was done by the federal government to cushion the impact of those freight rates on the economic life of these provinces. Adverse tariff conditions prevailed, but again nothing was done to cushion the impact of those tariffs on the people of the provinces. If the provinces face such conditions again, they will need constitutionally guaranteed powers which have not yet been granted to them. The provinces need recognized constitutional powers so that they can act to meet depressions or other emergencies which might arise.

The provinces must have a constitutional power to resist any centralization moves of the federal government. An example of this we saw in the Sirois report, a matter which I do not propose to discuss at the present time. The Liberal government at Ottawa proposed to act on the Sirois report, which was designed to utterly destroy the financial independence of every province in this dominion. For example, Mr. Speaker, in connection with adjustment grants—hon. members will recall that the provinces were to receive these grants—Quebec was to receive \$8 million a year. The rest of the provinces combined were to receive only \$6 million. The province of Alberta alone is today receiv-

[Mr. Blackmore.]

ing a larger adjustment grant than that every year. According to the Sirois report recommendations, Alberta was to receive nothing, British Columbia was to receive nothing, and Ontario was to receive nothing.

Now that report was seriously considered by the members of the government, many of whom are now sitting on the treasury benches in this house. That report was seriously considered by the party which now controls this country. Can you blame anyone who has the interest of this country at heart for rising in his place to oppose a set-up under which such a thing could occur? We simply must be on our guard if we are going to be worthy of the responsibilities resting upon us. In addition to that, it is important to consider the protection of property and civil rights which are also the charge of the provinces.

Let me make the stand of the Social Credit party abundantly clear. One of the most pathetic things in public life in this country, Mr. Speaker, is that a man will say one thing in this house and his political opponents will go all over the country declaring he said another. I wonder how in the world this country can be honourably governed when men resort to such base tactics? Let me state once more, specifically, the position of Social Crediters in this matter. We did support the principle of the union of Newfoundland with Canada. Anyone who says we did not is lying. We still support that principle, and we shall do so. We did support the proposed terms of the agreement, after careful consideration of all the details presented to the house. We still do. We have not changed, nor do we now change our attitude towards this most important step in the completion of Canadian federation.

In introducing the resolution which is now before the house on the motion of the Prime Minister, the government has chosen however a procedure which could be easily interpreted, as the leader of the opposition has shown, as an amendment to the British North America Act. We cannot, therefore, do less than support his amendment requesting that the provinces be consulted. If we did anything else it could be interpreted as opposition to the fundamental principle of decentralization and provincial autonomy for which we have stood throughout the years. The stand which we propose to take now, we believe to be the only safeguard to our constitution.

I think I have made quite clear the stand we are taking and the reason for our intention of voting with the Conservatives on this amendment to the proposal of the Prime Minister.

Mr. A. L. Smith (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, in rising to make a speech for the first time during this session of parliament,