

Newfoundland

in the agreement, then right at the outset we are accepting the inclusion in the agreement of something that the people of Newfoundland, within a comparatively short time, may consider unsatisfactory, having regard to the speed with which those adjustments took place after the terms of the dominion-provincial agreements were announced in the House of Commons in 1946. I therefore come back to my comments of yesterday on this subject. I suggest to the Prime Minister that consideration be given to the unsatisfactory results that might follow the inclusion of a limitation of that kind, and that, through negotiation with the representatives of Newfoundland, this particular restriction be deleted.

In so far as these arrangements are concerned, it is appropriate to point out that the representatives of Newfoundland have concurred in these terms. Whether the authority of those who represented Newfoundland was adequate is, as I said yesterday, something to be determined by the people of Newfoundland and the government of the United Kingdom. The mere fact of concurrence, however, does not constitute a reason for opposing the terms under which the union goes forward. I wish to make it clear that I see very serious objections to the provisions I have mentioned. I think it would be desirable that these grounds of possible objection be removed. It could be done by consultation; and, if it is done, at least two reasons for misunderstanding in the near future may have been withdrawn from the terms of union.

There is in this agreement a provision that the subsidy payments may continue, not for the shorter period in which they are payable to the other provinces but, on the option of the representatives of Newfoundland, for an extended period of eight years. This is not a ground for opposing the terms of union, although I do object in principle to such an arrangement. It has been agreed to by certain provinces. I think it is an unsatisfactory arrangement, but that is for them to decide. The whole problem, of course, can be solved when there is a resumption of the dominion-provincial conferences and the dominion government and provincial governments sit down, as they should, and discuss the whole relationship of the dominion and provincial governments in the tax field, with particular reference to the financial requirements of the municipalities in Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The very terms of this agreement once more emphasize the need for the revival of that conference, which only stands adjourned by the dominion government and can be

recalled at any time by them. This action has been requested over and over again, not only by myself, but by other premiers of the provinces of Canada. The terms of the agreement emphasize as well the need for a conference which will set up a continuing, integrated, functional relationship between the dominion government and the governments of the provinces, so that the very type of discussions which are suggested by some of the terms of this agreement could, from time to time, be dealt with by the representatives of those governments who are working together within this federal structure, and who can deal with practically any problem that may arise, without the necessity of any constitutional change, so long as they work together in a spirit of co-operation and good will.

I should like particularly to remind the people of Newfoundland that, in supporting this bill which embodies these terms, it will be my aim, as it will be the aim of those associated with me in this house, to bring about such a conference at which Newfoundland and the other provinces will be present, where the combined constitutional authority of all these governments can be brought together most effectively for the advantage of the people of Newfoundland, of every other province of Canada, and generally for the welfare of Canadians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I must remind the house that if the Prime Minister speaks now he will close the debate.

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, when I asked a few moments ago for the unanimous consent of the house to hear the remarks of the leader of the opposition, I did not realize what I was letting the house in for. But I am sure we have all found it most interesting to hear him extol and congratulate himself on the high statesmanship of his attitude in respect of dominion-provincial relations.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Speaker, I rise to a point of privilege. I sat down because the Prime Minister indicated that he was going to speak. I received no concession from this house when I spoke; and I sat down on the understanding that the Prime Minister was going to speak.

Mr. St. Laurent: On the point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the leader of the opposition read the rules of this house. When he does so, he will learn that, if the mover of a motion speaks in the course of a debate, he closes the debate; and that no one can be heard in that debate after he has spoken. If the leader of the opposition felt that I was rising to speak, and did not object to my doing so at that time, his failure to