

Newfoundland

limit my few remarks to the matter now under discussion.

However, the hon. member for Gaspé offered a suggestion, and it would be most interesting to know whether the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) and the government are prepared to endorse a proposal that a meeting of provincial prime ministers be held to consider the matter now being discussed.

I imagine that before the end of this debate, the Prime Minister or members of the government will officially confirm the proposal made by the hon. member for Gaspé.

Mr. Langlois: Mr. Speaker, I believe a correction is in order. I hardly think my suggestion was not that now credited to me by the hon. member for Charlevoix-Saguenay (Mr. Dorion).

I suggested that, following abolition of appeals to the privy council, the provinces should meet and submit their views as to what they consider the best way of amending our constitution.

My suggestion had nothing to do with the present discussion.

(Text):

Mr. Dorion: Mr. Speaker, I do not think the hon. member is entitled to make a new speech. If he wants to put a question to me, I am ready to answer it.

Mr. Langlois: Provided the hon. member makes his speech, not mine.

(Translation):

Mr. Dorion: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Gaspé also stated that in the matter at issue, the provincial premiers should rise and make strong representations against the government's stand at this time.

That is a peculiar way in which to discuss the problem now before the house. After all, it is here, in the House of Commons, that we should decide whether or not one of the clauses of the British North America Act is to be cast aside.

It is for us in this house to decide whether we shall violate a provision of this act and, even if the provincial premiers should protest officially, I believe it is here that the matter should be discussed; it is for us to take a definite stand on whether we intend to respect the federative agreement.

I might add too that some protests have been made already, if I am not mistaken, some of them quite vigorous, especially by the premier of Quebec. The hon. member for Gaspé will note too that quite recently those representations had some repercussions in the constituency of Nicolet-Yamaska.

[Mr. Dorion.]

I have heard in this debate, Mr. Speaker, a most peculiar argument. I quote:

The fact that the bill providing for union with Newfoundland was unanimously adopted by the house prevented the amendment now before us from being presented.

Well, such is not my way of considering this matter. When the bill was first presented, the question was to deal with the principle of the union with Newfoundland and to determine the terms of this union.

But today we are considering the procedure, and as a proof of this, the Prime Minister himself refers to the "procedure" when dealing with the resolution.

I quote the following, from page 494 of *Hansard*:

It is well known in this house and by the public that there were provisions in the British North America Act of 1867 looking to the union of Newfoundland with Canada—

And from the same page, in the next column:

The terms of section 146 of the British North America Act being no longer applicable, another procedure had to be resorted to.

A little further on, I quote:

There is a second reason why procedure not expressly provided for in the British North America Act was resorted to. If that procedure had not been followed there might have been some question as to its legal effect.

Therefore, the address we are now discussing and the amendment that is submitted to us have to do with the procedure to be followed for achieving the union of Newfoundland with Canada, and that procedure is all the more important since it involves a basic principle expounded in the British North America Act.

Reference has often been made to that provision of section 146 and it is there that we find the principle to be followed in such a case as this one.

Besides, if those provisions of section 146 had been followed, it is quite probable that no one would have seen fit to start the present debate, because in that case we would have remained within the limits of the constitution as established at the time of confederation. For instance, in the case of the entry of Prince Edward Island, there was no need of consulting the provinces, because the methods and the provisions of the British North America Act were then followed.

The same thing happened when British Columbia joined the confederation. Consequently, when those two provinces were annexed, it was not necessary to initiate a