

*Newfoundland*

constitution and the spirit of our people. The people of Quebec need have no fear of it. But supposing by chance there happens in Canada what has happened in numerous countries throughout the world today; suppose that the seats of the mighty in the legislature are occupied by men who are hostile to minorities, who are hostile to Christianity, who are hostile to civilization and decency as you and I know it, Mr. Speaker?

Their electors will say: So, you made it possible, by creating a number of precedents passed by the narrowest of party majorities of those sitting in the seats of government, to deny us those things for which we have battled and stood from the day that our forefathers put their feet on Canadian soil. Hon. members can tell their electors of the very able arguments of the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent), but again I ask them: What will they say when they are asked what would have been the verdict if that argument had been presented to a jury composed of Cartier, Cauchon, Chapais, Dorion, Langevin, Taché and others whose names elude me at the moment? I think my hon. friends opposite who find it in their hearts to support this resolution and defeat the amendment will have to answer these critical and crucial questions.

A great deal has been said about the insignificance—the word is mine and if anybody does not like it I will use another—of the provinces. The provinces have a great role to play in the life of our country. We rely upon them for a large measure of the protection which is necessary to the life of a contented people. These separate centres of political action in this country are the very basis of our confederation and of the contented and orderly life of our people.

In conclusion I therefore adjure the members of this house to consider very carefully their conduct before they make of the constitution of Canada the plaything of a very temporary and possibly vanishing governmental majority.

*(Translation):*

**Mr. J. A. Dion (Lake St. John-Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, I had not intended to take part in the present debate, but following the challenge of the hon. member for Stanstead (Mr. Hackett) I feel compelled to reply. He asked us what we would tell our constituents in the province of Quebec when questioned about the way we proceeded regarding the annexation of Newfoundland. Here is what I intend to say to them: First, that a bill regarding Newfoundland was submitted

[Mr. Hackett.]

to the house, where it was debated, and that the hon. members opposite did not deem it advisable to oppose it in the first place. However, having suddenly discovered that it entailed a constitutional matter about which they should protest vehemently, the debate having ended, they submitted a motion with the intention of stirring up a new debate. I shall also tell my electors that, according to section 146 of the British North America Act, the Canadian government had all the required authority, granted by the fathers of confederation, to accept Newfoundland and annex it as a province, having had that right since 1867. I shall also tell them that the amendment of my hon. friends opposite amounts to saying that they want consultation with the various provinces in order to ask them what Newfoundland should have done in this instance.

The hon. member for Stanstead is an eminent lawyer, since he is president of the Canadian Bar Association. Therefore, whenever a procedure is referred to him, he must, by force of habit, investigate it to find out whether it applies and is likely to give practical results. In fact, whenever a petition similar to the amendment now under consideration is submitted to a lawyer, he must move for details and particulars; he must certainly require information to find out what is involved and how the petition applies.

The hon. members who were in the house this afternoon realized that the Minister for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson) proved peremptorily and rather amusingly that the amendment moved by the Progressive Conservatives had neither rhyme nor reason.

Indeed, the real purpose is not to discuss Newfoundland's union with Canada, nor to consider on its merits the constitutional aspect of the matter, but simply to keep on playing the game of political football begun a few months ago between Ottawa, Quebec and Ontario. That is the only purpose, and this is so true that the remarks of the hon. members of the opposition bear no relation to the wording of the amendment itself. As a matter of fact, the wording of the amendment refers only to "consultation" of the provinces, while the word "consent" constantly recurs in the remarks of the hon. members. Of course, it is an altogether different matter, as the hon. member for Stanstead pointed out. Indeed, when a client comes to your office for a consultation, he is given what amounts merely to an opinion, which places him under no obli-