

Newfoundland

America Act has to be qualified. There is in fact a provision for amending our basic constitution in the matter of bringing new parts of British North America into confederation.

I am not going to rehearse the demonstration of the obvious which the Minister of Justice has just given to us. But it does seem strange to me that, in relation to this subject about which there is some mention in the British North America Act, we should have all these technical and legalistic arguments.

The other thing that has bothered me in this debate, Mr. Speaker, was brought home during the speech, both before and after the dinner recess, by my hon. friend the member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker). In common with other members of this house, I always listen with a great deal of interest to the speeches the hon. member makes. I enjoy the way in which he builds up his case, and the use he makes of the material upon which he draws. No man in this house studies more or shows more background in the speeches that he makes. But this evening, he did something—possibly he was unconscious of what he was doing—which amazed me. The member told this house of the position taken by his party in 1946. He stated that position correctly. He referred to the amendment that was moved in that session by himself, and he was correct in saying that that amendment was identical in form with the amendment that is now before the house. What was the issue before us at that time? The question was a request for an amendment to the British North America Act to provide for redistribution. The hon. member and his party took the view in 1946 that we should not ask for or be able to obtain an amendment of that character by a simple majority vote in this House of Commons. When the hon. member finished, I asked if he would permit me to ask a question. Perhaps I was a little too late, since it took some time for the applause for his speech to die down. At any rate, he did not answer my question. I asked him what position his party took back in 1943, but the hon. member made no reply.

May I tell the story. I refer you, Mr. Speaker, to July 5, 1943. As a matter of fact the hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker) during the course of his remarks this evening took up a copy of *Hansard* for July 5, 1943, and quoted a certain passage from a speech delivered by my leader, so I take it he must know the position taken by his party as recorded in that issue of *Hansard*. He must have known the way in which he voted, and that the question before the house was an amendment to the British North America Act. What for? To postpone redistribution. If the

[Mr. Knowles.]

hon. member for Calgary West (Mr. Smith) will permit me to agree with him on this point rather than with the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson), I would say it was an amendment to the British North America Act. At the end of that address, there was the usual phrase that all the acts down to and including this one may be described as the British North America Acts, 1867 to 1943. In other words, it was an amendment to the British North America Act, and it was achieved by a simple majority vote of this house.

My hon. friends to the right supported the move on that occasion. The member for Peel (Mr. Graydon), who was then leader of the official opposition, spoke on the question, but during the whole course of his speech did not raise the question of reference to the provinces. The hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker) did not speak at all. Only one member of the Progressive Conservative party raised the question at all, and that was the member for Saint John-Albert (Mr. Hazen), but he and the member for Lake Centre, the member for Peel and the whole of the Progressive Conservative group who were in the house at that time voted for the amendment. In other words, in 1943, they gave their approval to the principle of securing an amendment to the British North America Act by the simple process of a majority vote in this House of Commons.

I may say to my hon. friend the member for Lethbridge (Mr. Blackmore), who was also protesting a short time ago the consistency of the stand his group had taken, that his group took the same stand. They voted with the hon. members to my right and the majority of those opposite to support this amendment in 1943. There were few members in the house at that time who voted against that amendment. I believe there were nine, all of whom came from the province of Quebec.

When one reads the debates on these two occasions, 1943 and 1946, one cannot but notice the interest members had in the end result of the amendment that was being sought. In 1943, the amendment was to postpone redistribution, and it seemed to be to the advantage of Ontario and all provinces west. In 1946, the amendment seemed to be to the disadvantage of Ontario and the provinces west.

An hon. Member: The war was over.

Mr. Knowles: Oh, my hon. friends are saying it was an emergency, but I do not find the hon. member for Stanstead (Mr. Hackett) joining in that excuse. He was not in the