

Newfoundland

sult the provinces with a view to securing from them their observations, their comments, after an examination of the terms of union? That, of course, is what consultation normally means. That would take a good many weeks, as those of us who have had to work on this problem for the last eighteen months must realize.

After the provinces had gone into the question, and after they had made up their minds as to what should be done in the matter, then presumably they would report their view back to the federal government. Then if they had any changes to suggest to the terms of union, which have already been passed by this house, presumably they would ask that those changes be made which would mean another conference between the representatives of Newfoundland and Canada. Then after that consultation the parliament of Canada would have to decide whether there had been a satisfactory conclusion of such consultation.

What would be a satisfactory conclusion? Would we ask each province whether the result of the consultation had been satisfactory to it, or would we come back to the House of Commons and ask the House of Commons to decide whether a satisfactory conclusion to the consultation had been reached? In the latter case, would we then decide to act on a majority of one, and if we acted on a majority of one how much better off would we be than we are now?

It has been suggested in the debate that a satisfactory conclusion might be two-thirds of the provinces agreeing to the terms of union. I would ask those opposed to the procedure suggested by the government if they would accept that as satisfactory. Are they willing to accept, as a satisfactory discharge of consultation with the provinces affected, that two-thirds of the provinces agree to the course proposed; or is it desirable that every single province should agree before we have a satisfactory conclusion to the consultation?

Mr. Coldwell: Mr. Duplessis' view.

Mr. Pearson: It does show how difficult it would be for any member of the House of Commons to accept an amendment of this kind couched in these terms, with all the vague difficulties and dangers which may arise out of varying and contradictory interpretations. I also suggest that the debate has shown another thing which goes further than this particular amendment, and which has been referred to by other speakers in the discussion. It has pointed up and underlined the necessity for the working out in this country of some agreed method of reforming and amending our own constitution if such an

amendment is required. If this debate has done nothing else but bring that nearer I think it will have served a useful purpose. If we are not able to agree among ourselves as to how that should be done, then we shall have endless and bitter argument over this very question of consultation, and what it means. We shall be adding fuel to the fire of those who are stirring up these conflicts of province against dominion, which will not only result in controversy and bitterness but indeed might result in ending all prospects of a strong, united Canada or in fact any Canada at all. No one in this house and no one in this country wants that result.

Just before I sit down, Mr. Speaker, I should like to quote once again from the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew), who has the great virtue of putting these things in strong, pungent and effective language. On January 1, 1939, when I think there was a provincial election in the offing, he said:

I shall go to the country clearly on the stand that Ontario is Canadian, one province in a united Canada within the British empire. I advocate the strengthening of national ties and divesting the province of every conflicting authority not necessary for provincial purposes.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure whether I would go quite as far as that or use language quite as strong; but the idea and spirit behind that language, I suggest, are right and good. I agree, and I hope we all agree, that no greater issue confronts the Canadian people today than the reconciliation, in a federal state, of the rights of the provincial and federal governments in such a way that without weakening those provincial rights there will be in Canada that national unity without which there cannot be national strength, national freedom or national progress. Let us raise our country high above the level of its lesser citizens who would set province against dominion, race against race, class against class and creed against creed, and by doing so would debase the great destiny that faces this country of ours.

Mr. John T. Hackett (Stanstead): Mr. Speaker, as one of those "lesser citizens"—guiltless of the crimes which were committed for six weeks in Nicolet-Yamaska—crimes against unity, crimes against decency—I dare raise my voice in this chamber.

Mr. Abbott: Nobody over there understood what was said in Nicolet-Yamaska.

Mr. Graydon: You're on the toboggan; that's what is the matter with you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Golding): Order. I must ask hon. members to refrain from interrupting the hon. member who has the floor. This is a free forum and every hon.