

THE MEANING OF CO-OPERATIVE FEDERALISM FOR CANADA

The following is a partial text of an address by Prime Minister Pearson to the National Conference on Labour-Management Relations in Ottawa on November 9:

...In setting out upon our difficult national venture almost 100 years ago, Canadians adopted what I have called "live-and-let-live-federalism". It proved adequate to our needs before 1914. But as Canada's needs grew, so did the role of government. We had to make adaptations, especially under the impact of war; and, naturally, our adaptations to the need for bigger government was greater centralization within our federal system. It was the Federal Government that took the responsibility for raising vastly greater revenues. It was the Federal Government that assumed the responsibility in areas of overlapping or imprecise jurisdiction and in areas of mutual concern. Not unnaturally, this wartime process of centralization called forth an inevitable reaction; for centralization past a certain point cuts across the basis of political consent on which our confederation rests.

Today, the economies of large-scale operation and mass communication exercise strong pressure towards centralization. But it is clearly true in a country so large as ours - federal in its structure, dual in its origin, diverse in its composition, interests and traditions - that government authority and responsibility should in large measure remain decentralized. To ignore this would destroy, not strengthen, confederation; and those who preach such a centralizing doctrine in the name of unity weaken unity and could destroy it. The same tragic result could come from the exploitation for political purposes of current stresses on unity, and of the efforts being made to reduce and remove them.

NO FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL ISOLATION

The resistance of government to certain dangerous pressures of centralization cannot, however, take the form of a return to the "live-and-let-live" federalism that was adequate to our needs in the nineteenth century. Federal and provincial responsibilities can no longer be divided into isolated compartments. Contemporary government is chiefly concerned with positive, not negative measures, where problems are shared and responsibilities for them become mingled. What one level of government does strictly within its own jurisdiction often has an intimate bearing on the problems with which the other has to deal in its jurisdiction.

Thus, in seeking solutions to the problems created by the conflicting pressures of our times, I am impressed by the disappearance of the simple shapes, the neat packages, the obvious black-and-white alternatives of yesterday. But, in our search, one of yesterday's characteristics suggests the course to follow.

Today, no less than in 1867, this country is possible because the basic Canadian attitudes are those of co-operation, accommodation and understanding. These attitudes are even more essential in this age of interdependence.

COLLECTIVE WILL TO CO-OPERATE

Today there are very few areas of exclusive concern. Mutuality of interest is recognized within and among countries. It is recognized in trade, in defence, in communication, in science, in air pollution and hopefully in space. It is this recognition of mutuality of interest which has become the foundation for labour-management co-operation. It is the same recognition in the public sector that has created the need for co-operative federalism. For, just as no system of law can for long enforce justice against the will of those in its jurisdiction, no division of sovereignty in a federal system will work today without general political consent. There must be an attitude of co-operation and a collective will to work for the achievement of common ends. In this sense, co-operative federalism is more a frame of mind than a framework of legislation.

PARALLEL AND CONCERTED ACTION

A healthy federalism, a co-operative federalism, if you will, is one in which the two levels of government fulfil their own responsibilities and respect each other's, but do so taking into account their mutual concerns. When there are responsibilities for parallel action, it should be concerted action, built on consultation and co-operation. And where consultation uncovers strong differences in view, there must be something more - compromise. Without compromise, we could no more have a workable federalism today than you, gentlemen, could have union contracts. In that context, I would think that you are familiar with one of the difficulties with compromises; while we all know that they are essential, they are easy targets for people who choose to believe - or, for their own purposes, try to make others believe - that any general agreement must mean individual surrender, and that, therefore, any compromise is capitulation.

As I have indicated, the division of jurisdiction in Canada was comparatively simple in the days of small government because government itself was reasonably simple and clear-cut; and it was in that context that the Fathers of our Confederation did their work and did it well. They gave birth to a form of federalism which, on the whole, has worked remarkably well for almost a century.

A system of government, however, is a dynamic organism, and a cardinal sin of any organism is to fail to adapt to changing environment. It is a sin of omission, but a mortal one, because as history shows, the penalty is extinction. I refuse to believe that Canada will commit that sin.

But while the operation of our original Canadian federalism must change, has changed and is changing, I can assure you that one thing which will never change is our need for a strong government at the centre. That need must be met or Canada cannot survive in any tolerable way. Such survival in strength is surely as much a matter of provincial as of federal concern.

So, by co-operative federalism, I certainly don't mean that the provinces will take over the responsi-

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