

National Centennial Act

and I doubt if an academic exercise of the kind suggested by the hon. gentleman at this stage, before the federal-provincial conference, would further the end he has in view.

Mr. Knowles: As a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, will the government consider such a proposal immediately after the federal-provincial conference has been held?

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Speaker, it seems to me this is a matter in which the government should take its responsibility in the normal way, according to the rules of the house.

Mr. Knowles: That is what it should do.

NATIONAL CENTENNIAL ACT

AMENDMENTS CHANGING NAME, ENLARGING MEMBERSHIP OF ADMINISTRATION, ETC.

The house resumed, from Tuesday, November 19, consideration in committee of the following resolution—Mr. Pearson—Mr. Batten in the chair:

That it is expedient to amend the National Centennial Act to change its short title from the National Centennial Act to the centennial of confederation act and to change the title of the national centennial administration to that of the centennial commission; to provide also that the centennial commission shall consist of a commissioner, an associate commissioner and not more than twelve directors in lieu of eight directors and to provide further for certain administrative changes in connection therewith.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gregoire: Mr. Chairman, following my remarks of yesterday, I should like to deal today with a most important point.

The hon. member for Marquette (Mr. Mandziuk) wanted to know what it is we would like to change in our Canadian constitution, in the British North America Act. We said that we would like to modify the way the British North America Act has been enforced, and the constitution carried into effect.

I have here the British North America Act, and I would like to show the house that this act has been violated several times by the federal government and that when there was violation of the B.N.A. Act, it was not done by the provinces to the prejudice of the federal government, but by the federal government to the detriment of the provinces.

If one reads clause 91 of the British North America Act and considers the various matters which are the federal government's responsibility, one finds that never did the provinces interfere in the fields placed under the federal jurisdiction.

For instance, let us take the first point:

Amendments concerning the legislative authority of the parliament of Canada.

Never did the provinces interfere in that field. Second:

The public debt and property;

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

The provinces did not busy themselves with what concerns the federal public debt. Here is another point.

Unemployment insurance;

The provinces did not enter that field either.

And then:

The borrowing of money on the public credit.

The provinces were not concerned with that field.

And further:

Postal service;

The Postmaster General himself would be the very first to say that the provinces never concerned themselves with that matter.

And, further on, we find:

The census and statistics;

The same can be said here.

Further along we see:

Militia, military and naval service, and defence;

Navigation and shipping;

Currency and coinage;

Banking, incorporation of banks and the issue of paper money;

Weights and measures;

Bills of exchange and promissory notes;

Interest;

Patents of invention and discovery;

Copyrights.

In every case, it may be noted that the federal government has been free to legislate in those fields, and that the provincial administrations did not deal with those matters, which are under federal jurisdiction.

On the other hand, if we read clause 92, which lists the exclusive powers—I repeat “the exclusive powers of provincial legislatures”—and consider, among others:

The establishment, maintenance, and management of hospitals, asylums, charities, and eleemosynary institutions—

—we find that, through its hospital insurance scheme, the federal government did enter that field.

[*Text*]

The Deputy Chairman: Order. I think considerable leniency has been shown in this debate, but I fear we are getting away from the resolution before the committee.

[*Translation*]

An hon. Member: Everyone spoke of just about anything yesterday.

Mr. Gregoire: We are speaking of the centenary of confederation and it is in connection with the celebration of that event that I am referring to the act which established confederation. I feel my remarks are entirely relevant, considering especially the speeches which were made by those who spoke before me in the house. In my opinion, I am not straying from the subject under consideration by mentioning the act on which confederation