

*Dominion-Provincial Conference*

of the distribution of powers and resources between the central and local or provincial governments. We must review that. In the case of Canada, this review must include a review of spending powers. The federal government repeatedly has intruded into spheres that ought to come under provincial jurisdiction. A times, it has seemed that the central government has exercised excessive power, and it might be beneficial if this matter were examined. It seems to me that the basic task which confronts the continuing committee, this parliament and all those concerned about this matter, is a review of the main functions of government, and what government can do as the servant of the people, about housing, pollution, health and the 101 other things with which governments deal. We must review those functions and determine whether those functions are most effectively carried out at the federal or provincial level or in co-operation between the two levels.

Some aspects of government obviously come under one heading. Defence, obviously, comes under the federal government, and is an aspect of international affairs. Most, if not all, aspects of international affairs come under the federal government. The field of education, in a bilingual country like this, may come under other levels of government. Some aspects of our national life will come under the domination of a variety of powers and governments. All these government activities must be reviewed and looked at. But the rub will come when it is found that there are different points of view in different parts of the country in respect of this matter. I think there are excellent historical and other reasons why a province like Quebec, representing a special culture, a distinct language and different background, should want a degree of decentralization in order to control certain aspects of its own life which do not come into play in the rest of Canada. We must evolve a constitution which respects the right of the people in Quebec to say, "We want to protect our own culture and rights by having legislative jurisdiction over certain social matters." But at the same time we do not want to deprive the other provinces of the opportunity to work together on a national scale in order to carry out some purposes they may think are important.

It is for these reasons that we in this party have spoken about a special status for Quebec. It is not that we want special privileges for one province, namely, Quebec. Rather,

[Mr. Brewin.]

we put forward our views because we recognize there are different requirements and needs in different parts of the country. We are not dogmatic. We do not contend we have all the answers.

I suggest that the rub will come when we get down to cases and talk about the distribution of powers and distribution of money. It is high time we got on with the job. I agree with what the Prime Minister said this morning, that delegation of responsibility or power, whether from the federal to provincial or provincial to federal governments, is not the answer. Nevertheless the concept of delegation must be examined. Rights or powers that can be acquired by delegation and then withdrawn are not good enough. Such a system does not work. Any system of delegation must be flexible if it is to meet our needs. Above all we must avoid rigidity, since with rigidity our federation will not work.

In this party we do not stand for any hard and fast solutions. I do not know whether the Prime Minister was being rhetorical when he asked us to explain our beliefs to him in this relatively short debate. We have ideas. We have looked into the matter and feel we can contribute to the solution of our problems. But we are not giving out any hard and fast solutions at present.

I submit that there is an urgent need to set up this parliamentary committee which has been mentioned. I, for one, have been urging the establishment of this committee as long as I have been a member of the house. I corresponded with the former prime minister and talked to him about it. He was always in favour of it, but the time was never opportune. He agreed it was a suitable idea, and good that Members of Parliament should discuss among themselves in committee these problems; he also said the committee should be set up at a timely moment. I say that no moment is more timely than the present. Specific issues could be referred to that committee, and discussions with all levels of government could be held.

I conclude by saying that I believe nowhere is the duty of discussing changes to our constitution greater than it is in parliament. This parliament is a representative body of Canadians and there is no other equally representative body of Canadians. Not only are we representative in the sense we are elected to represent our people; but we come from every region, from every background and profession, and from every social level, as it were. If we, in this chamber cannot,