

*Grants to Municipalities*

It cites two examples of the reason for coming to that conclusion, one that he has had the magnanimity to introduce this bill—which, of course, has been introduced in the previous Parliament by the person who I thought had the responsibility, namely, the former minister of national revenue or the minister of finance, because all the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Cosgrove) does is to assume responsibility for the administration of the provisions of the bill—and the second that the minister gave a commitment, as though it were something new, to participate in the Rideau convention centre, which, of course, was a commitment also given by the previous government. I wonder whether that will sound reasonable for this normally unbiased and impartial newspaper, *The Citizen*, in so far as the Liberal party is concerned, to have come to those conclusions.

It is something like the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston) on Sunday on the program called "Insight", hosted by Mr. Douglas Fisher, who took credit for the implementation of project management and project control, cost control guidelines and control of cost overruns in Treasury Board as if they were something new. Indeed, all those programs were implemented by my colleague, the hon. member for York-Peel (Mr. Stevens), when he was president of the Treasury Board.

A more serious question to which I should like the minister to reply when he closes the debate is whether or not it is his intention to delegate all or part of the authority which is granted to him under the provisions of the bill to the National Capital Commission in so far as the administration of municipal grants in lieu of taxes is concerned because, as the minister knows, there are some 17 municipalities in the National Capital Commission, which body has, over the years, cemented a very close working relationship with those various municipal bodies. It was very strongly put, during the term of office of the previous administration, that perhaps this delegation should be made. While there was no final conclusion, because there was no conclusion of the debate on the bill which died on the order paper in the last Parliament, I wonder what the position of the government or of the minister will be with respect to the delegation of any part of those powers which are granted to him under this legislation to the administration of the NCC.

**Mr. Knowles:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. A few moments ago you suggested that if the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Cosgrove) were to speak at that point, he would close the debate. The hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) seemed to go along with your statement because he referred to the minister closing the debate.

May I remind you, sir, that we are at third reading and the minister does not have the right to speak twice, therefore, he does not have the right to close the debate. But I suggest that since he was not here when the motion was moved, the House agree to let him speak any time in the debate. I suspect from the way Your Honour has been smiling and nodding your head that you agree with me he does not have the right to close the

debate. He may be the last speaker, but that would be accidental.

● (2130)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member's point is well taken. I wonder if we could put it this way: by unanimous consent of the House, perhaps the minister could be invited to speak at this point and close the debate. Is that agreed?

**Mr. Knowles:** I think we should just give him unanimous consent to speak, even though the motion was already moved in his name. Since he does not have the right to close the debate at third reading—although he may in fact be the last speaker—let us let the rules take their course.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Chair has not observed any other members seeking to be recognized. In the circumstances, by unanimous consent the Chair calls upon the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Cosgrove).

**Mr. Dantzer:** Mr. Speaker, may I be recognized?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Okanagan North (Mr. Dantzer) wishes to be recognized. I hope by the consent of the House I can recognize the hon. member. I apologize, but I did not realize the hon. member was seeking to attract the eye of the Chair.

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** By agreement the Chair recognizes the hon. member for Okanagan North.

**Mr. Vince Dantzer (Okanagan North):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words this evening now that the minister is here. Indeed the minister has been designated in publications throughout various parts of Canada as the president of municipalities. I think it is incumbent upon him to prove that particular designation which the newspapers have given him.

Once again I should like to speak to this act. It has been said already that the act attempts to improve the position of the federal government vis-à-vis municipalities. At report stage I said that it does not go far enough. The House should be aware as should this country that the whole place of municipal government in Canada is not recognized fully or appreciated.

I believe in an old political principle, that is, the political principle of "subsidiarity", which indicates that the laws should be made by those people who ultimately will be most affected by them. In that sense the municipal government is probably the most direct, efficient and best kind of government in this country. Certainly we have heard from many people that this Parliament does not work any more because it is overworked. With that understanding one should attempt to give government to other areas, but it is pointless to give responsibilities to other levels of government unless they are given adequate financing. I do not believe the federal government can justify its position vis-à-vis municipalities over the years in terms of financing.