

Federal-Provincial Relations

Islands (Mr. Douglas) was premier of Saskatchewan. I do not think that that former premier of Saskatchewan—he was also a former leader of the NDP—ever asked Ottawa for permission for anything he wanted to do while he was premier. I do not think Ottawa stopped him from implementing social programs.

Mr. Benjamin: Right! He forced Ottawa to get into them.

Mr. Breau: It would be good if other provincial premiers would do the same. If they were a little more positive and stopped bitching, they might solve their problems.

• (2130)

Mr. Alexander: Explain.

Mr. Breau: When his government decided to implement the hospital insurance program, they did not wait for Ottawa; they went ahead and implemented it.

[*Translation*]

In the social and economic fields, the provinces do not have to wait for Ottawa's approval. They do not have to blame Ottawa, if they do not try and solve the problems which are their responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, it has become a habit, particularly in Quebec—and the hon. member for Papineau mentioned it before and I should have liked the hon. member for Sainte-Marie (Mr. Valade) to mention it too—for the federal government to serve as a smoke-screen, a scapegoat, to conceal all the problems. As soon as something goes wrong, it is Ottawa's fault.

As the hon. member for Winnipeg North said before, how many premiers have, for the last two years, tried to say that the economic policy of the government has been a handicap in federal-provincial relations? How many premiers answered, when they had problems: Let us blame the federal government anti-inflationary economic policy?

Mr. Speaker, Ottawa has become the scapegoat; instead of solving their own problems, the provinces simply blame the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, I could also speak of the New Democratic Party, but I would like to be as brief as possible.

I simply want to say that many members of this House, who sit on various committees, do not always respect the rights of provinces when talking of Canadian politics. To give only one example, yesterday, the leader of the NDP (Mr. Lewis) asked the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Davis) a question concerning the decision of the province of Quebec to grant a licence to a lumber company.

Is the hon. member for York South not intelligent enough to know that this is a decision which comes under provincial jurisdiction? He knew this very well, Mr. Speaker. And yet, he asked this question, as can be seen on page 3341 of *Hansard*, thinking that the Minister of the Environment would say to Quebec, like a grandfather or a big brother: No, do not grant a licence to the ITT Rayonier Company. Do not do that. Grandfather Ottawa keeps an eye on everything. This is the concept of federalism of the hon. member for York South, and probably that of the New Democratic Party.

[Mr. Breau.]

The way they see it, when it comes to resources development they tell the provinces: Hold on because we in Ottawa are more qualified.

Yet, in the field of foreign investment they are siding with the provinces this evening. I doubt if a single province shares their views on that point, even Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, absolutely nothing prevents the provinces from deciding which measures are good from the political and economic point of view and from telling companies which develop resources: You must use those resources so that the people in the provinces will benefit from them.

For instance, there are mining operations in my area in northeastern New Brunswick. Right now the government allows Brunswick Mines—a wholly owned subsidiary of Noranda Mines Limited—to export pure zinc to Europe. Should the federal government be blamed for that? Is the federal government going to suggest to the province to stop disposing of its own resources in that way? This example shows that when a province has the will, it can find the way.

In the field of welfare, is it the federal government which has introduced very far-sighted social programs supported by many members in this House, such as Opportunities for Youth and the Local Initiatives program. Why were they not initiated by the provinces? What was holding back the province of Quebec—the hon. member for Sainte-Marie (Mr. Valade) said that Ottawa was preventing the province of Quebec from introducing social programs—from introducing community development programs, employment programs for the have-nots in environmental improvement projects, training programs of all kinds; including social welfare programs such as the one administered by the minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) to which Ottawa will contribute 50 per cent. No. They just say that Ottawa interferes with provincial affairs.

For myself, Mr. Speaker, I see two sides to the matter of social services. There are, first, the grants given directly to individuals. In my opinion, it matters little to the person who receives it whether the cheque comes from Ottawa, Quebec, Fredericton, or Victoria.

Moreover, there is no provision in the constitution to prevent a province from levying taxes to cover the cost of additional programs. Why do they not do so?

On the other hand, nothing stops provinces from establishing real programs of social development, social motivation, or social commitment. Why do they not do so?

[*English*]

The hon. member for Fraser Valley West should listen to the translation, because I do not think he understands what I am saying.

[*Translation*]

I do not know whether it is because of lack of competence—

• (2140)

[*English*]

Mr. Rose: Mr. Speaker, I should like to pose a question to the hon. member.