

*Interim Supply*

Second—and this is most surprising and intriguing in constitutional history, but I think it is very worrisome and should be worrisome to all Canadian citizens—the dominion government appears not to be the champion of dominion rights, but the willing and seemingly eager agent of increasing provincial rights. In an excellent series of addresses delivered over the C.B.C.—and the Massey lectures justifies the C.B.C. for many other things—Professor Underhill, a former curator of Laurier house has said:

As things are, however, our national government in recent years has approached the ten lusty provincial governments, and especially that of Quebec, in an attitude of timorous politeness, as if apologizing for the fact of its own existence. And the Canadian people as a whole cannot apparently reach any agreement to entrust their fortunes to any one political party with a majority support. They watch apathetically while our unprotected federal quarterback, looking in vain for a pass receiver, is overrun by the big husky line-men of the provincial defensive team and thrown for another loss.

So says Professor Underhill, a man of eminent perception, learning and great objectivity. I was intrigued by a statement in a speech by the Minister of National Health and Welfare not long ago, delivered to the women's Canadian club in Quebec city on September 28. I always read her speeches with great care. I was intrigued by these few lines:

Although I hardly think the time has come yet for the federal government to abdicate all its parental responsibilities and head for pasture or pension, I do think it is time to turn over to them the far greater measure of responsibility that they have earned. The federal government has an obligation to do everything within its power to assist all the provinces in realizing their ambitions, and yet at the same time ensuring minimum national standards.

Now, I will be fair to the hon. lady, as I always try to be to both ladies and gentlemen. There are other portions of her address that do not follow that particular golden text, and I would not suggest that was the theme of her remarks. However, it is surprising to find even that statement from anyone charged with dominion responsibility as a minister of the crown.

In order to illustrate further the uniqueness of our present situation, the very source which once seemed to gang up on strong dominion authority, now defends that authority. The opposition in this House of Commons I would list first, and then, of all people, the premiers of the provinces. The premier of Saskatchewan is quoted as having said not

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

long ago after one dominion-provincial conference:

At one dominion-provincial conference after another the provinces, faced with increasing costs are making ever greater financial demands on Ottawa. And year by year, the federal authorities, for the sake of national unity, have been forced to give ground.

We believe the federal government must have adequate financial resources to cope with unemployment and economic recessions.

I wonder why he said that.

Above all, we believe that Canadians, regardless of where they were born or happen to live, should have certain minimum living standards and, as a matter of right, a basic standard of education, health and welfare services.

While I would not expect provincial premiers to be in the forefront in the struggle to uphold the strength and effectiveness of federal powers I welcome this contribution and completely agree with the dangers he points out and the course he suggests.

The official leader of the Conservative party in British Columbia, a man who was lauded, and rightly lauded, this morning described confederation as being—

—so designed that "in giving strength to the union—to the country—the parts would thereby make it so strong that all would derive strength from it. Strength to be given, strength to be received, strength to be shared, in a partnership within a union."

Then another strong provincial voice, the attorney general of Manitoba, Mr. McLean, the other day stressed the importance of a strong central government to the unity of Canada. He said:

The founders of our nation believed that the predominant power must lie in a central government.

Must we look to the provincial politicians to preserve the dominion structure? If we look elsewhere we do not find that effort.

I am interested to note that the press of Canada has become very concerned about this matter—the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the great metropolitan dailies of Toronto as well as many other newspapers. I just happened to notice an editorial in the *Moncton Times* which reads in part as follows:

The federal government is the string which prevents an object which is being whirled around in a circle from flying away. Only in this case the string has 10 major objects (the provinces) and two less large (the territories).

If this string is cut the threat of these pieces which comprise Canada flying away (Balkanization) becomes very real.

So perhaps the people of this country are not as apathetic as Professor Underhill thought. I am glad they are not, because in