

Government Orders

If there is an area in which we, Quebecers, have excelled, it is forestry. If there is an area which is truly ours since 1867, it is also forestry. And yet, Bill C-48 allows the Canadian government to put Quebec's jurisdiction aside and to enter into agreements with individuals, organizations and companies.

If at least the government had included an obligation to consult the governments of Quebec or the other provinces concerned, Bill C-48 would not have been acceptable, but it could have been less offensive, less detrimental to federal-provincial relations.

Clause 35 is a good example of this desire to interfere in an area under provincial jurisdiction. In order to understand the significance of this clause, I think it is worth reading it again. It reads as follows:

5. The Minister may cause distribution to be made of duplicate specimens to scientific, literary and educational institutions in Canada and other countries, and may authorize the distribution or sale of publications, maps and other documents issued by the Department.

There is nothing too serious up to that point. I will continue:

6. Subject to section 4 of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources Act respecting the powers, duties and functions of the Minister in relation to matters mentioned in that section over which Parliament has jurisdiction, the Minister shall be responsible for coordinating, promoting and recommending national policies and programs with respect to energy, mines and minerals, water and other resources—

● (1555)

All this in an area under provincial jurisdiction. Clause 35 of the bill goes on as follows:

—and, in carrying out his responsibilities under this section, the Minister may

(a) conduct applied and basic research programs and investigations and economic studies in relation to those resources, and for that purpose maintain and operate research institutes, laboratories, observatories and other facilities for exploration and research related to the source, origin, properties, development or use of those resources;

Again, all this in an area under provincial jurisdiction. Let us move on. The Minister can:

(b) study, keep under review and consider recommendations with respect to matters relating to the exploration for, or the production, recovery, manufacture, processing, transmission, transportation, distribution, sale, purchase, exchange or disposition of any of those resources, and with respect to matters relating to the sources of those resources within or outside Canada.

We are still in an area of provincial jurisdiction as recognized by the Canadian Constitution. But the highlight of the bill is undoubtedly the following paragraph.

7.(1) The Minister may, in exercising the powers and carrying out the duties and functions mentioned in section 6, formulate plans for the conservation, development and use of the resources specified in that section and for related research and the

Minister may carry out those plans in cooperation with other departments, branches and agencies of the Government of Canada.

The federal government assumes all powers in an area which comes entirely under provincial jurisdiction. Allow me to draw to your attention the fact that provincial governments have not been mentioned once since the beginning of clause 35. Clause 35 concludes in these terms:

In formulating and carrying out any plans under subsection (1), the Minister may:

(a) cooperate with the provinces and with municipalities;

(b) enter into agreements with any person or body, including the government of any province or any department, branch or agency of such a government, respecting the carrying out of those plans; and

(c) make grants and contributions and, with the approval of the Governor in Council, provide other forms of financial assistance.

(3) The Minister may, in exercising the powers and carrying out the duties and functions mentioned in this section, including in relations to technical surveys, consult with, and inaugurate conferences of representatives of producers, industry, the universities, labour and provincial and municipal authorities.

That means the Minister can even go directly to municipalities without consulting the provincial authorities. In my opinion, clause 35 represents one of the worst attacks this government has ever made against powers handed down to provinces since it came to office. Voting against this bill is of the utmost importance.

Since when can the federal government enter into agreements with municipalities without the province's consent? Since when does the federal government have the right to invade a field of provincial jurisdiction without the province's agreement or without even having to consult it? Such an attitude leads me to believe that no understanding, no harmony is possible in a country where the central government acts without the agreement of its main partners. One would think that this government cannot read its own Constitution, that of Canada. One would think that it is deaf when it comes to Quebec's and the provinces' claims.

● (1600)

What we see with Bill C-48 is a government insisting on trespassing on an area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction without the legitimacy that the explicit agreement of Quebec would confer on its action. A government which is getting involved in the writing of Canada-wide standards regarding natural resources. A government which has not learned from past mistakes and still believes that coast-to-coast policies are the key to collective wealth. This is completely false.

It is also a government which is harbouring the very same illusions it denounced in the past. This government is giving itself the means to act directly, without anybody's agreement, particularly that of the main stakeholders, the provinces, by