

*Suggested Dominion-Provincial Conference*

changing picture which has been presented to us as a result of the hydrogen bomb. He pointed out that with the enormously increased destructive power of this bomb we must review our attitude to the whole problem of civil defence.

I am referring to the speech made by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) at Windsor on April 23. Having reviewed the new situation resulting from the terrible power of this bomb, the minister had this to say, as reported in a dispatch in the *Windsor Star* of April 24:

It is no longer possible, he said, to indulge in the idle luxury of debating whether this civil defence job is a federal, provincial or local responsibility.

The size of the possible threat is much too great for that; it is so large that it clearly and inevitably involves us all.

I do not think that there will be much tendency on the part of any hon. member in this house to disagree with the fact that this is a problem which involves us all. This is a subject which is of primary importance in the minds of people throughout the world who hope that there may be some possibility of peace through the joint efforts of the freedom-loving nations. Having said that, may I point out, however, that it is one thing to emphasize the seriousness of this situation and it is another thing to leave the impression that there is any less reason to discuss where the responsibility lies.

Let it be granted that every one of us must be prepared to consider this subject and to join in every way we can in preparing to meet the threat which is of a nature that we do not care to contemplate but which could be a dreadful reality. It had been pointed out by municipality after municipality across Canada that their burdens were already so heavy that they could not meet the financial responsibilities involved in some aspects of civil defence. If this problem has suddenly increased both in scale and in importance, that fact is all the more reason why there must be some understanding as to how this plan of civil defence is to be carried out, how the reassessed responsibilities are to be borne and how the financing of those responsibilities is to be accepted by the different bodies charged with the responsibility of finding the money necessary for that purpose. This is one of those problems which have remained unsolved because of the failure of the government of Canada to continue those conferences which might have found a solution of our difficulties along those lines.

Then let me refer to something else that, within this past week, has emphasized the problems that we face. Last week was education week. In different parts of Canada the

cost of education and the problem related to the financing of education at the municipal level was being considered by those who have the responsibility of dealing with that subject. From many parts of Canada came requests for direct assistance by the government of Canada in a field which, under our constitution, is exclusively within the jurisdiction of the provincial governments. Surely that fact in itself emphasizes the growing complexity of this problem. Furthermore, within the time since we last met, from a number of municipalities have come recommendations that assistance in different forms be given to the municipalities directly from the government of Canada because of the inability of those municipalities to meet certain of their obligations without still further burdening the homes and the real estate within those municipalities.

These things have impressed on the minds of all of us the fact that there is not today a satisfactory understanding of this problem or anything approaching a solution of something that has been discussed on so many occasions in the past. Before we adjourned for the Easter recess I expressed the hope that the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) would extend to the provinces an invitation to attend a conference where these problems could be discussed. The Prime Minister has made no reference to that suggestion. We now meet again, and on this first day that we meet I refer again to this subject and I mention only some of the pressing demands which suggest the need for bringing together the governments within this country in order to discuss ways and means of solving those problems which are much in the minds of every one of us.

Mr. Speaker, I sought to emphasize the fact that this is not a subject which is causing concern in Canada alone. I pointed out that in Australia, under another federal constitution although a slightly different one, discussion is taking place on this same subject with an increasing sense of urgency. We also find in the United States discussions of the same subject. Mr. Speaker, under our constitutional system, this is something as to which the Prime Minister is called upon to act. If there is to be a conference, then it must be the responsibility of the Prime Minister to decide that this conference will take place. I sought to emphasize previously that this is a problem which can cause misunderstanding as well as considerable difficulties in many fields unless it is tackled and dealt with in the manner that was suggested by this government itself some years ago. After all, the war years left in this country—as in other countries—problems which were