

Government Organization

your attention to the fact that I do not wish to meddle in the election campaign now going on in Quebec. I wish to emphasize in this house, however, the need to entrust a department with the responsibility of informing the Canadian people not only in one area, but in the province of Quebec as everywhere else, about the importance of giving responsibilities to Ottawa and what belongs to the federal government, with no discrimination whatsoever.

I said earlier that the present bill does not provide for a new minister for Quebec independence. I heard one of the R.I.N. speakers state in Quebec that all those ministers and departments, in short, all federal laws should be done away with at all costs, that we should withdraw from confederation. The same person said that the withdrawal of Quebec from confederation was not a solution.

• (5:00 p.m.)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rinfret): Order. I would ask the hon. member for Villeneuve kindly to speak on the bill now before us, bearing on the organization of four departments which are to be organized now and on which the hon. members are asked to express their views.

I quite understand that the other problem is of importance but when we consider the problem of the RIN as regards the independence of Quebec in relation to the four new departments that have to be created, I hardly believe that such a problem can be of much interest to the hon. members, although it may be quite relevant in an election campaign.

Mr. Caouette: I was just coming to the organization of the fourth department, namely, Indian affairs and northern development.

Now, clause 17 reads as follows:

The duties, powers and functions of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

It seems that this is a close equivalent to the Indian Affairs division now operating in the province of Quebec, Northern Quebec—

—extend to and include all matters over which the parliament of Canada has jurisdiction, not by law assigned to any other department, branch or agency of the government of Canada, relating to

- (a) Indian affairs;
- (b) the Northwest Territories and the Yukon Territory and their resources and affairs;
- (c) Eskimo affairs;

Mr. Speaker, there is in the province of Quebec now, talk of Eskimo affairs. In fact, there is considerable talk about it. We have

heard a Minister of Natural Resources of Quebec state that Eskimo affairs came under provincial jurisdiction, and I believe that it would be important at this stage to state that those who would liberate the Indians or the Eskimos from Ottawa are not more significant than those who cry for the independence of French Canadians from the Ottawa government. That is why I maintain that I should at least be entitled to refer to some statements made in Quebec and to say that I am not in agreement with those who claim that independence is not a solution but an instrument. Who among us, for instance, would give a razor to a child two or three years old because it is an instrument? It would surely be a dangerous instrument for him. I believe it is time for the federal government to take its responsibility, not get the jitters, and face the facts as they are.

Let us stop deceiving ourselves by saying empty words. Let us take the facts as they are, let us enlighten the population on their existence. That is why I am of the opinion, as I said earlier, that there should have been added a department of federal-provincial relations to those new departments, not a department which is fearful of facing young people, older people, those who are 18 or 21 and who will have the right to vote this year or next. It does not matter whether or not these young people have the right to vote, but we should explain to them clearly what is in their best interest and let them know the actual facts, in short, where we are going. But in order to know where they are going, we must teach and show them. There are people who will follow anywhere, without knowing where they are going. I have heard quite a few young people say: We do not know where we are going, but we are going anyway. And they go along.

Let us consider the situation. That is why it is important to create a department of federal-provincial relations, and this is getting more and more imperative. The government too must realize and recognize that it is high time for these new departments we are creating to take their responsibilities concerning the provinces.

As for the provinces, let us transfer back to them what belongs to them. Under cover of war, in 1939, 1940 or 1942, Ottawa asked for prerogatives, rights—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. member for Villeneuve wants to put forward an argument from the constitutional point of