

mental co-operation. That is the way in which the Canadian people want us to operate, I am convinced.

I would like to point to the number of places in the country where there are intergovernmental teams. In Edmonton-Strathcona, which I represent, we have had an intergovernmental team of elected persons for some time, elected federally, like myself, elected provincially, within the federal boundaries, and elected representatives of the city council, also from within that area, along with the former mayor of the city.

This team of ten elected officials representing three governments, all of us elected by the same people but at different times, finding ourselves overlapping, began a series of meetings in the same spirit as the national tri-level meetings that have been held. Those meetings convinced me that a breakthrough is possible in this intergovernmental jungle, this growth, this overlapping to which I referred earlier, by a better spirit of relations built on mutual respect, knowledge of one and another's problems, and an ongoing structure for the kind of meetings at which we try to co-operate with one another for the benefit of the people, and not just in abstract terms.

I can point to a couple of specific cases, such as the relocation of tracks in one area, and the building of a complex for handicapped persons, a project that certainly cut across three levels of government. I point to this, my experience, limited as it is, in Edmonton-Strathcona, to underline my conviction that intergovernmental relations at the national level are absolutely essential to cut away a lot of the jungle through which we are manoeuvring.

I think that that is very much the spirit of the bill, that the secretaryship of federal-provincial relations will move forward in the area, I anticipate, and will certainly move forward in the area of tri-level conferences. We have had two such conferences. Now we have not had one for over a year, and already we are feeling the effects of there not having been a tri-level conference because the problems that municipalities are facing are being exacerbated with each passing day. Those are problems which I would summarize by saying that they do not have access to taxation in a manner that they need in order to meet the problems of urbanization.

That is why I began my remarks by stressing urbanization as well as big government, and constitutional reform which we hope is on its way. A way must be found for the municipalities to increase their share of the tax revenue, because municipalities are carrying the brunt of many social problems caused by urbanization and they do not have the ability to raise tax revenues in an elastic way, such as do provincial and federal governments.

● (1650)

The municipalities want to see a restructuring of revenue generating capacity and involvement in the federal and provincial decision-making process. Their demand for greater participation was supported by the joint committee on the constitution. Recommendation 67 says:

In the light of the injustice done municipalities by their having to rely on the property tax for the bulk of their revenue, there should be a sharing of tax fields between governments that would allow municipalities direct access to other sources of revenue.

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What this new access will be can be determined come only by consultation and negotiation. It means that willingness by the federal government to find a tax solution to urbanization must be a principal step. At present a public study is examining the finances of the three levels of government. The second national tri-level meeting was held in Edmonton in October, 1973. At that meeting the representatives of 4,500 municipalities, the mayors and the municipalities association, asked the federal government to study the mechanism whereby municipalities would be given access to extra revenue. In other words the municipalities asked the federal government to begin the process of negotiation.

Whether the federal government will agree to give provinces extra tax points which can be transferred, under the constitutional prerogative of the provinces to the municipalities I do not know. However, something must be done. I was present at the meeting and was impressed with the urgency of the situation in which the municipalities find themselves as the result of federal policies. Under those policies the federal government has built up tax revenues which support the federal government; at the same time, however, the level of such taxation is eroding the possibility of other levels of government being able to meet their own legitimate needs. I am referring specifically to the needs of municipalities carrying the burden of urbanization.

What does this add up to? It adds up to the need for structuring intergovernmental relations in a way which meets the needs of the three levels of government, but not in a way which will lead to this process being dominated by the bureaucracy in Ottawa which adheres to the philosophy of centralization and believes it knows all the answers. That is why it is important to make sure that the one who is supposed to be instrumental in making decisions in this area can walk into this House, put forward his proposals, and be questioned on them.

In conclusion I make an urgent plea for the resumption of tri-level meetings, even if the study of public financing is by no means complete. It is important to begin the process of streamlining the way in which the government of this country is being conducted. That process actually began with the report of the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on the Constitution.

A number of steps have been taken and this bill is a step forward, albeit a small one, as I said previously. This streamlining process to which I referred should include, as well, the federal-provincial committees—at last count there were 175. These committees address themselves to all sorts of problems without co-ordinating their activities with municipalities. The number of these committees could be cut.

Governments may still surprise one another in their negotiations. At least, if the suggestions I have put forward are adopted, there would be a structure to co-ordinate planning, which is something we need most of all. And, while governments would not yield control of their provinces, and they would be acting within their rights under the constitution, this new, suggested structure should produce a climate of persuasion for the common good. Even this goal, limited as it is, would be, in the judgment of the joint constitutional committee, "revolu-