

Interim Supply

Mr. Choquette: A good answer.

Mr. Grafty: Mr. Chairman, if I have said a few partisan things up to this point I hope I can say what I am about to say in a bipartisan spirit. We in the House of Commons recognize, and I think are beginning to recognize more and more no matter to what party we belong, that parliament as an institution only works well when each of us has done all he can in a positive and dynamic spirit of good will to unite the country. No matter what party we support in the House of Commons, we are now beginning to recognize that parliament as an institution really works well only when we have done all we can to improve federal-provincial relations.

I would be the first to recognize that the present government has been faced with a very difficult situation. Things have been moving very quickly in terms of federal-provincial relations, in fact, in an almost abnormal way in the last three or four years, and adjustments have had to be made rather rapidly. Possibly hon. members who support the government will say that I am being partisan but I think we are faced with a very serious situation so far as the attitude of the government is concerned, in that the pendulum has swung from where it was a year ago, when the government would not consult at all with the provinces and its whole economic program was floundering, to the point where many serious-minded Canadians are wondering whether we will have any federal government left at all if the Prime Minister continues on the same course.

I believe that four basic things must be done and probably must be done even before we consider the constitutional amendment procedures soon to come before the house in all their detail. Along with many Canadians I believe that before or certainly by 1967 we must have a modern constitution suited to modern times. I am not going into the niceties of whether or not we should completely scrap the one we have now and draft a new one, or whether we should simply drastically amend the one we have. I am convinced of one thing, Mr. Chairman, and I think there is great support for this in every corner of this house, that much sooner than later we must have a modern constitution suited to modern times.

Second, I should like to dwell on a point that I realize is repetitive coming from me. I am more than ever convinced, as I see things going on that are going on, that one of the reasons for our present ills relating to federal-provincial relations is the lack of

permanent consultative machinery between Ottawa and the provinces. Again, I suggest the immediate establishment of a federal-provincial permanent secretariat at the heads of the governments level, based on the ARDA approach. I am not really interested in whether or not it is done in exactly this way, but I am interested in the immediate establishment of federal-provincial permanent consultative machinery.

When this is done, then the federal and provincial governments can meet and immediately plan priorities in the social and economic fields. This is something that must be done immediately. There must be co-operation between the federal and provincial authorities in planning priorities in the social and economic fields. Then we could have meetings on the constitution at different times and in different parts of the country in order that long before 1967, I hope, we can come up with a modern constitution suited to modern times.

Some people feel that Conservatives have preconceived ideas about whether the federal government should be strong or the provincial government should be strong, or whether there should be centralization or decentralization. This is a purely hypothetical debate so far as Conservatives are concerned because we do not approach federal-provincial relations in any doctrinaire sense at all. Some people have said that back in 1867 Macdonald and Cartier were strong defenders of central government. Of course they were. In 1867 there was no whole, there were just the parts. It was the great challenge to Macdonald and Cartier to form the whole out of the parts and to defend it. As I have said before, Conservatives fight extremes wherever they find them. As the pendulum swings too far in any direction I think you will find the approach from our side of the house, and I am sure very often from the other side of the house, is based on principle and not a doctrine that will not change.

I should like to say this, in my closing keynote remarks. As I said, when we bring the constitutional amendment procedures before the House of Commons, I should like to talk in more detail on the various clauses. I say this, Mr. Chairman, that representing Brome-Missisquoi in the province of Quebec, a constituency which is 70 per cent French speaking, I declare now that I have never met one separatist in my constituency. I have never met one. I notice the hon. member for Verdun is paying special attention to this remark, and I should like to congratulate