

Dominion-Provincial Relations

when they come forward with a useful, legitimate program in which the federal government ought to participate.

• (6:40 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. J. P. Goyer (Dollard): I would readily agree with the suggestion of the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) for a white paper outlining certain areas of federal-provincial responsibility, but the field should not be limited, as suggested in his motion, to

—a program of manpower development, the war on poverty including assistance, welfare and family allowances, and corporations and institutions with credit and related functions in their objects and powers.

It can be said that the notice of motion, as such, points out that all social areas should be considered as well as a major part of the economic area but, on the other hand, forgets just the same something that is essential to the constitution, the cultural and linguistic point of view.

The hon. member says that we must consider this problem as Canadians, but as such I realize that cultural and linguistic problems are neglected, put aside and totally ignored in some provinces of the confederation. That is an important matter when it comes to publishing a white paper.

If all those matters were to be considered, it would be necessary to take a lot of time to write a new constitution, whereas, in practice, we realize that the constitution is going more and more toward important changes, asked for not only by the federal government but by the provincial governments, and not only that of Quebec.

On the social level, for instance, the health insurance scheme has raised in the provinces questions which had not been raised previously when the federal government enunciated a social policy. Today, not only Quebec but other provinces such as Ontario are raising questions and asking various things of the federal government about a health insurance plan.

As a matter of fact, when the whole field of social security is considered, we realize that it has developed thanks to the federal government. In fact, the provinces which were the first responsible in the social field, were negligent or failed to legislate within their own jurisdiction. In addition, the social security program of Canada was evolved during the war when the required taxes and capital

were and still are available to the federal government.

Therefore, the provinces took no action. Actually, the constitution prevented them from doing so. Under a good constitution, the role of municipal and provincial governments is to administer and legislate in fields belonging to them, while that of the federal government is mostly to legislate.

This is a healthy policy because the government closest to the population, especially in the area of social security, is in a better position to understand the problems and meet the aspirations of the population as a whole. It is also a simple question of efficiency that the government closer to the population can better supply its livelihood.

Why, on the whole, does the federal government hesitate to transfer social security to the provinces? Are they not better able to handle it? Why do we hesitate to turn over the war on poverty to the provinces, to let them handle the entire assistance, welfare and health programs? As I said a few moments ago, the provinces are asking for that. Why not meet their wishes? Why would we, in the federal government, not seek to simply mind our own business. There are several fields in which we could be active.

I think the demands for minimum national standards in the field of social security are right and could be very easily negotiated with the provinces. The provincial governments should realize that they are not only subordinate governments; it would be necessary for them to take the time to read the constitution and realize their fields of jurisdiction and act accordingly. That is the white paper now in existence in Canada. Thus, this would make easier a revision of the social security field for, in fact, it was realized, with the question of social insurance and family allowances, that the federal government fails to adjust its policies in the field of social security. That may be due to a certain conformity or to a certain negligence on the part of a civil service, which lacks creative ideas, new ideas, but the turning-over of social security to the provinces could result in the organization of the social field in such a way that present day demands be better met.

It will be said that to achieve social security, one must have the necessary economic instruments. That is true. It is sound democratic principle that the government which provides a service must be the one which collects the taxes.