

Adjournment Debate

The Hon. Member also referred to the Applebaum-Hébert Report which is the federal cultural policy review committee. As a Member of the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture, he knows full well that the committee is looking at other aspects of the Applebaum-Hébert Report, part of which is this very subject. Therefore, the Minister is waiting to get some response from the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture as well as from the Provinces.

I believe it was a year in May that the Minister met with his provincial counterparts when this subject came up. He asked for a provincial response. We have not received any response to date. Until we get some input from the Provinces and from the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture very little can be done about it.

I can assure the Hon. Member and the House that we in fact are very cognizant of this particular problem and would certainly hope that we would be able to get the co-operation of the Provinces, municipalities and all others concerned to come up with a workable solution to this very pressing problem as it affects Canadian authors.

PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS—FEDERAL EXAMINATION OF
PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION. (B) GRANT TO BRITISH COLUMBIA
ORGANIZATION

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta): Mr. Speaker, last week I rose in the House to ask a question of the Minister of Justice (Mr. MacGuigan) relating to the practice of the Government in funding organizations that operate in each of the Provinces. Specifically, I was alerted by the fact that the Government had given grants to two different organizations in British Columbia with the expressed purpose, apparently, to enable those two organizations to demonstrate—using today's language—against that particular Government.

The Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) first raised this question in the House regarding Government funding of organizations in the Province of Quebec first, and now of organizations in British Columbia.

If there is any one thing at which the Canadian people will point as the legacy of this Liberal Government to the country—and I think there are many prime choices—it is the state of anxiety and conflict which exists. The fact is that the Government under the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has caused region to fight against region and different levels of Government to fight against each other. It has caused sectors to fight against other sectors. It seems to me that the Prime Minister has been thriving on a program of divide and conquer.

There is no question that the Government has the ability to do what it has done. It has the financial resources to fund these organizations in each of the Provinces, and it may even have the law on its side, in order for those organizations to fight legislation or programs within those Provinces. The question is not whether the Government has the legal right to do it; not a question of whether the Government can, but a question of whether the Government ought to do so. It is a

matter of propriety; whether the Government should use federal tax dollars to fund organizations in any of the ten Provinces in order that those local groups can demonstrate against any of the programs within the Provinces.

● (1820)

The Minister of Justice says in this case it is a matter of human rights programs. Who says? It well may be, but is it the prerogative of the Minister of Justice or the Secretary of State (Mr. Joyal) to decide that possibly human rights will be violated in the Province of British Columbia? Is it the prerogative of the Minister of Justice or the Secretary of State to decide whether human rights or language rights will be proscribed in the Province of Quebec? Are they doing the same thing in the Province of Manitoba? Are they doing that in the Province of Alberta? There are about ten provincial Governments that would be interested to know what are the criteria which allow the federal Government to decide it can spend tax dollars to fight programs within each of the Provinces.

The question is not whether it is lawful or whether it is within the purview of the Government, but is it right that each of the ten Provinces now should have to look over their shoulders when they pass legislation, when they conduct programs, when they institute new programs, to see whether the federal Government is going to run counter to the Provincial program?

It seems to me that if Confederation has matured, and we all believe it had when we debated the Constitution two years ago, to the degree that the Provinces can now make their own decisions, should they not democratically rise and fall on the basis of their own legislation? Is it within the purview of the federal Government to fund organizations to fight provincial Governments? Should the Government do so?

I think the Prime Minister would be the first to say that democratically this Government will rise or fall on the basis of its own programs, and that the electors will decide whether or not this Government should be elected on the basis of how it has administered the affairs of state. If he believes that to be true federally, why should he not believe that to be true provincially? Are there not ten Provinces elected democratically? Are they not also defeated democratically when they violate the trust of their electors?

I would like to have an answer from the Parliamentary Secretary as to the criteria the Government uses to spend our tax dollars to fight provincial programs initiated by democratically elected Governments which can also be democratically defeated? Is it right for the federal Government to use our money to fight against provincial programs? That is what we have a right to know, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Brian Tobin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to apologize to the Hon. Member opposite in that neither the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice nor the Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State are here