

*Interim Supply*

does not seem to exist any immediate or remote conspiracy to take away from the central government any of its legitimate powers. On the other hand, decentralization in itself is not by any means a bad thing, on the contrary.

By the way, may I say very frankly and very openly at this stage of my remarks that I am in favour of a united Canada, that I have confidence and hope in the future of confederation. And, in my capacity as the authorized spokesman for the Quebec caucus of our party, I add that like the provincial leader of the Conservative party, the hon. member for Three Rivers (Mr. Balcer), we on this side of the house do not consider that we have been given a mandate to take away from the present federal power its legitimate rights.

If we acted any differently, we would not then truly understand where our duty lies. Still, I must say we are aware that, if confederation is to continue and progress, if it is to rally the support of the majority in Canada and more especially in the province of Quebec we must face present realities, and especially that which implies recognition of the French fact, of the legitimate aspirations of the French group as an essential partner in confederation. As such, we must endorse and support as much as possible, and with all the constitutional means of which we can avail ourselves, the autonomist attitude adopted by almost all the governments of the province of Quebec, whether Liberal, Conservative, Union Nationale or other.

Mr. Chairman, were it not for such an autonomist attitude, confederation could not survive. This is not a Quebec problem only; it is a national problem, because Canada is not only composed of two main ethnic groups coming from two founding races, it comprises also many other ethnic groups. There is, in this vast geographical territory called Canada, many different economic and geographical areas which, in order to survive, must have powers which, within their jurisdiction, are completely autonomist, independent and free from any interference by the central power.

Mr. Chairman, there is another argument to support the claims of the partisans of provincial autonomy: the transformation within confederation and throughout the country in the last few years, especially since the last world war.

Everyone knows that under cover of the war and of the economic needs resulting therefrom, the central government monopolized as never before nearly all the powers

and the economic sinews in the country. On the other hand, since the war the wind of decentralization started blowing and the provinces, having under the constitution sovereign powers in their own field, acquired responsibilities which they never had before and were faced with all sorts of needs. Now, to carry out their responsibilities in these fields, the provinces had to have fiscal means which, largely under cover of the war and also for other but less obvious reasons, were monopolized by the central power; the provinces have been claiming these fiscal resources since the end of the war. I am thinking, for instance, about their responsibility in the fields of public education, communications within the provinces, municipal services, social welfare and particularly about the development of national resources of all provinces. Those are concrete tasks, tremendous responsibilities the provinces must assume and that is why there was a whole series of federal-provincial conferences during which all premiers spoke with one voice in order to give back to the appropriate jurisdiction the means to legitimately carry out the obligations incumbent to them under the constitution. And I think that such a trend will certainly continue.

There was much more. Since the end of the war—it is proper to say so—there has been a new awakening in the province of Quebec, and especially among French Canadians. Quebec is now conscious of its power and of its human as well as material resources. I think it is accurate to say that the great majority of its population, having such resources, want to use them for legitimate purposes and to promote its development in all fields, so that it can be strong, more powerful and more united to share in this great Canadian achievement.

I think that such is the true voice and desire of the moderate elements in the province of Quebec. I leave out of consideration all those who, because of past disappointments, have lost their illusions, and no longer believe in the possibility of the existence of a confederation where their rights would be fully recognized.

Mr. Chairman, I think that while desiring national unity, we must demand from our government leaders, from all those who have responsibilities, to pursue a genuine Canadian policy and I cannot see the pursuit of such a policy without the implementation of a great many reforms, the need of which is getting more pressing day by day.

I am thinking in particular of the necessity for our country to approve a truly distinctive