

*National Energy Board Act*

about orders of government, the federal order of government and the provincial order of government. In the past few years we have beaten consultation right to death. You cannot turn around in this country now without having a federal-provincial conference. Every time any matter of policy comes up in the two departments I am associated with, whether environment or science and technology, the inevitable answer is: well, we have to wait until we talk to the government of such and such a province on that particular issue. Consultation is not only the order of the day, we have almost reached the point at which it is becoming an impediment to getting things done in this country.

● (1650)

I like the simpler age. I like the way the Fathers of Confederation laid it down. They recognized that the federal order of government ought to be supreme in this area and the provincial order ought to be supreme in that area, and they should each go about doing their respective jobs, but not in isolation. There are times, as I said earlier, when a matter of policy or a matter of action one government is about to take, or contemplates taking, will have an impact on the other government's area of jurisdiction. For that reason, not only because of common sense and common decency but the sheer rules of pragmatics dictate that you ought to say to the other order of government, the government of Alberta or the government of New Brunswick: look, we are contemplating doing this, how will it affect your own legislation or your ability to meet your objectives in this particular area, be it agriculture, energy or fisheries? That is common sense and you cannot legislate it. Why do you need to legislate it?

When you get to the point in this country where there is such mistrust of motives, such a lack of faith in the person who happens to sit in another Parliament than you, or who happens to sit at another cabinet table than you, and when you get to the point where you have a basic lack of trust in that other individual just because he wears a different hat than you, then it is not legislation that is at fault; it is not a lack of good legislation that is causing your problems, it is something much deeper and much more basic.

It is time for a good inward look at ourselves when we begin at every turn saying that the reason the Prime Minister of Canada is doing this is because—and then assigning some base motive, or the reason the Premier of Alberta is doing this is because—and then assigning some base motive to his action. When we reach that point, and in some respects we are at that point in this country on the very subject of energy, something basic has to be done. This is a good part of the reason for the problems we are having, and part of the reason we are hearing Armageddon pontifications on the constitution. It is not because we have vastly different objectives for our people, it is because of a monumental communications barrier. It is because we have become habituated to assigning motives all the time; what is Peter Lougheed really up to, what is Pierre Trudeau really up to or what is Mr. Lyon really up to? Sometimes we would serve this country a lot better if the

energy pricing discussion which is before us, and if other issues before us such as the constitutional thing which is not far from my mind—were not being discussed with this basic mistrust which underlies, it seems, everything we now do.

I have seen separate countries conferring with more faith in each other than I see us doing as provinces of the same country. We talk about each other as though we have a couple of heads. We talk about each other as though we were a bunch of rogues. The fact is that we are, in this chamber with 282 parliamentarians, and in the other 12 chambers across this country in the ten provincial capitals and the two territorial capitals, a group of several hundred legislators who have offered ourselves to serve the public good and not to tear daily at each other, trying to character assassinate, trying to tear down reputations and assign motives. That is why this subject of consultation the member talks about is an important one. However, it is not one that we should try to embed in legislation. I submit that is not the route to go.

I am frightened as a Canadian that we may well fall into the trap of thinking we can solve all our problems by dotting the "i's" in the right place and crossing all the "t's". I submit we will only solve our problems, be they in energy, which is the subject before us today, the constitution or any other issue, when we begin to accept each other around this country, be we premiers of provinces, territorial, provincial or federal politicians. We must accept each other as people who by and large have at heart the interests of the Canadian people, or those people in whatever part of Canada we happen to represent in our respective jurisdictions.

**Mr. Siddon:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. member for Burin-St. George's (Mr. Simmons) would permit a question during his time. It is a very simple question which arises from the very important point he has made, that there is an atmosphere of distrust in this country. Could he give us an explanation why he believes there is such an atmosphere in Canada today?

**Mr. Simmons:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the hon. member for Richmond-South Delta (Mr. Siddon), for his question. I am encouraged but not surprised to find that he shares some of the concern I have just expressed on this particular subject.

I spent some of my time this summer, not enough I admit—I made a total of nine trips—west of the Manitoba-Ontario border in the four western provinces; in northern Alberta, southeastern B.C. and in various other parts of those provinces, as part of a self-assignment to get a better understanding of that part of the country. I have been encouraged when talking to a number of members, including my good friend, the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mrs. Mitchell), to learn that some months ago they spent some time in rural parts of Newfoundland, my own province. I have talked to other members of both opposition parties who, by virtue of being on standing committees or otherwise, at the initiative of their parties or themselves, have gone out to parts of eastern