

The second point which has been made consistently by most members of the opposition is that there has been too much rigidity in the attitude of the federal government, that in some way or another we have brought about contrived confrontation and that it has been a calculated program to create divisiveness, particularly between the federal government and the government in Quebec city. They have broadened that to take in all the provinces and, in addition to that, to take in a whole range of issues. Once again the record makes it perfectly clear that this simply is not the case. Repeatedly over these last eight or nine years this government has sought and has accomplished, in many instances, accommodations with the provinces on a scale and an importance not anticipated nor envisaged earlier in the history of this country.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jamieson: It is obvious some of the hon. members opposite are not impressed.

Mr. Grafftey: We love you, though.

Mr. Jamieson: I love you, too. In the interests of national unity I would even embrace the hon. member for Brome-Missequoi (Mr. Grafftey).

Mr. Grafftey: I could not get my arms around you.

● (1810)

Mr. Jamieson: He might have a little more difficulty embracing me, but the way I am going, even that may be possible before very long.

However, in terms of what I was saying a moment ago about what I describe as the legitimate willingness for accommodation on the part of the federal government, let me emphasize the word legitimate because hon. members opposite—coming back to my point about Newfoundland—must realize also that if there is too great a confusion of federal power and authority and the ability to control in terms of national events and items of national importance, then provinces like mine, Newfoundland, like the whole of the Atlantic area and indeed much of the rest of the country, would be in an extremely difficult position.

I say that anybody opposite who argues for a greater decentralization in terms of letting those smaller provinces stand on their own bottoms or float in their own dory, as we might say in Newfoundland, that he is underestimating the difficulties and problems that it would create. I also say that if we weaken the federal government to such an extent that it is impotent to deal with national issues, we are going to be in a much more serious position than any we have had up to the present time.

Newfoundlanders in particular about whom I have been speaking—but I am sure it is true of many other people in this country—would certainly not thank a government of Canada which dispensed its legitimate authority in ways which made it impossible for those provinces to turn, as they have to do, to a government at Ottawa to look after so many of their needs.

National Unity

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jamieson: In Newfoundland today some 60 cents to 65 cents out of every \$1 is originated from, or in another way provided, by the federal government, and many of those programs and plans are ones which are not in the classical concept a federal responsibility but ones which have been delightedly and gladly given by the federal government to a provincial government which it knows cannot possibly manage on its own.

So there has not been confrontation in the sense that hon. members opposite sometimes suggest. There has been, I repeat, a willingness to co-operate. I do not believe that you can find a government in the whole history of this country that has had a greater range of consultations and that has shown itself more willing to make adjustments and compromises where these were clearly to the advantage of the provinces, and where they did not at the same time undermine the essential strength that the federal government requires.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: That is nonsense.

Mr. Jamieson: There is another aspect to this question of contrived confrontation that frankly puzzles me more than any other, and that is the suggestion that in some way or other there was no problem with national unity in this country until the government assumed office.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: That's it.

Mr. Paproski: Why not?

An hon. Member: Right on.

Mr. Jamieson: Hon. members opposite can applaud, but let me tell them as someone who went through a Confederation argument on the other side of the issue that I brought people from the province of Quebec, as the hon. member for St. John's East knows, who made separatist speeches in Newfoundland in 1947. For goodness sake, to suggest now that nothing ever happened before 1968 is ridiculous.

An hon. Member: What has that got to do with it?

Mr. Jamieson: It has to do with your enthusiasm for the idea that everything was perfect before 1968.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: It was much better.

Mr. Jamieson: Let us look at the record with regard to the separatist problem. When did the first bombings take place in the province of Quebec, in 1968? No, it began back in 1961 and 1962. They should know, because they were the government of this country at that time.

An hon. Member: Oh, no, we were not.