

Interim Supply

national resources item 110a, and loans, investments and advances items L13a and L63a for which no amount is being released \$24,023,455.00;

(e) an additional one-twelfth of finance item 45a, \$83,333.34;

(f) one-twelfth of the amount of the item set forth in the supplementary estimates (B) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1964, laid before the House of Commons at the present session of parliament, \$583,333.34;

(g) one-twelfth of the amount of item set forth in the supplementary estimates (C) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1964, laid before the House of Commons at the present session of parliament, \$1,666,666.67;

(h) one-twelfth of the amounts of the items set forth in the supplementary estimates (D) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1964, laid before the House of Commons at the present session of parliament, except external affairs item 117d for which no amount is being released, \$6,178,667.17; be granted to Her Majesty on account of the fiscal year ending March 31, 1964.

Mr. Thompson: In making my comments today I shall try to be brief. The occasion is vitally important but I do not share any enthusiasm for unduly prolonging this debate.

The recent federal-provincial conference is now history. While it did not turn out as well as some may have hoped, it certainly did turn out a great deal better than many feared it might. I would commend the Prime Minister for his detailed report and explanation yesterday. I think it has helped all of us, as well as the nation, to understand the government's view of what was accomplished at the conference and the results which may be expected from it.

Perhaps no federal-provincial conference had received so much negative publicity in advance. The entire tone of the news media during the weeks preceding the conference indicated that Canada was headed into a major crisis which might well mean the splitting of our nation in two. Such was not the case, and I am sure Canadian citizens from Vancouver island to Newfoundland are relieved that it was not so. I believe every provincial premier, in spite of certain areas of difference which existed among them, should be commended for this demonstration that not one of them would have any part in demands which would pull Canada apart at the seams.

Let us hope we are entering upon a new era of consultative confederation. It is my hope and prayer that the conference in Quebec city in 1964 will prove as vitally important to continuing confederation in 1967 and beyond as the original Quebec conferences in 1864 were vital to the establishment of confederation and its continuation up to the present time. Perhaps the conference last week will represent a turning point in the history of federal-provincial affairs.

Another commendable feature was the decision to hold a number of ministerial conferences in the months ahead. We hear that

[Mr. McIlraith.]

the ministers of agriculture are to get together. The finance ministers will also get together to discuss matters relating to the next federal budget. The ministers of health are to get together to consider the problems arising from a hospital insurance scheme. This is an important subject on which there must be further consultation. We hear that the representatives of the different governments are to get together to consider ways in which more administrative responsibility relating to Indians and Eskimos can be passed on to the provinces. This is the type of continuing consultation which Canada needs. I believe this is progress, the kind of progress Canadian people expect from their elected governments.

I was interested in a point which Premier Lesage made in relation to this matter, when he said:

The present policy of making decisions behind hermetically sealed doors in different sectors of government is no longer at all possible.

That statement is very true. I was particularly gratified to hear that the Prime Minister indicated there would be some form of secretariat for co-ordination and liaison established. I would again urge the government, as I have done many times in the past, that the time has come when a full fledged department of government should be established for this purpose. In our federal government in Canada we need a department of federal-provincial affairs. I am pleased to know that the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam also supports this suggestion. We know that several provincial governments have already set up their counterpart ministries, indicating again that perhaps the provincial governments are ahead of the federal government in bringing in many of the logical reforms that are necessary.

I would say to the Prime Minister and to his government that diplomacy is good. There was a real place for it in the recent conference, but diplomacy in itself is not enough. We urgently need some leadership in Canada with relation to confederation, the holding together and the building up of our nation to the kind of country that we like to think Canada is. I should like to refer to a very interesting comment in this regard made by Premier Robarts of Ontario, as reported in the *Montreal Star* of December 2:

"A generation ago," said Mr. Robarts, "it was still quite reasonable to expect that many activities of the federal and provincial governments in the economic field could be carried on separately without much fear of duplication or contradiction.... The impact of governmental activity is now so great that unco-ordinated action by several levels of government can have serious effects on our economic development."