

Interim Supply

tion you will find differing conditions in one part of the country from the other

No country can exist under such a situation. Abraham Lincoln said it much better than I can when he said that a nation cannot live half slave and half free. What he meant by that was that the social and political conditions peculiar to slavery in one part of a country with the other areas where slavery is not allowed are not consistent with the maintenance of a national identity. If I may paraphrase that in a limited way, precisely the same situation appears here, and it is my submission that we will see a constantly increasing delegation of authority from the federal to the provincial governments resulting in a variation of conditions which is inconsistent with the maintenance of our nation.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, much of the blame has been placed at the door of one province, the province of Quebec, and I have no doubt that that province and its premier have been instrumental in pressing for these things. But I think some of the other provinces must take their share of the blame particularly when they realize, as I have said before, that they have been dealing with a weak and indecisive federal government willing to go to great lengths to make present promises without too much regard to the bitter fruits of those promises in the future.

I am one of those who have considerable sympathy with the vitality, lift and resurgence of the people of the province of Quebec and I hope they achieve their requirements with a fresh and vigorous approach which will advance the people of that province. But I would think that the responsible people of Quebec, who in my view are in the vast majority, would realize the dangers of pursuing a course which strengthens one or all of the provinces at the expense of the national government.

Under a federal system the central government must have the power, the strength and the responsibility to govern in the national interest and this must include without any impairment the right to decide fiscal and monetary policies, aspects of foreign exchange, external affairs, external and internal trade and commerce, immigration, national defence and so on. The federal government must have strength to initiate and continue programs and policies in those fields designed to lift up the people of the country within reasonable limits to the same level of economic, cultural and social well-being.

Surely it must be apparent to many of the provincial leaders that a weak central govern-

ment from which has been stripped real authority and power cannot hope to fulfil these functions. They must realize that by continuing along this course they will surely find that the central government has been so stripped. I make this appeal because it seems that the federal government we now have is not prepared to recognize this and in my view this places some responsibility on the provinces to do so.

There are those who feel that maybe we would not lose much if this country did disintegrate, but I do not think so. I think the world has been a better place because we on the northern half of this continent have seen fit to bring into being a nation which may well be pursuing a course that will lead to the same result as in the case of the people in the southern half of the continent, but which is pursuing it along different roads. I think that if we continue, as we have been doing under this administration, to weaken the federal government and strengthen the provincial governments this experiment is bound to come to failure.

Mr. Macquarrie: Mr. Chairman, I am not either a very loquacious or a very controversial person but I would not care to allow this opportunity to pass without saying a few words about what I consider the most important subject I have ever heard discussed in this chamber. It is something which in my opinion transcends all other matters to which we have been giving our attention, not only in this parliament but in many preceding ones.

My qualifications are not as good as those of the members who have preceded me. The hon. member for Bow River is a lawyer, the hon. member for Peace River is a lawyer, and the Minister of Transport almost became a lawyer. The closest I ever came to being a lawyer was to wonder one time whether I should go into law or theology, but for some strange reason I chose politics.

The question we are now discussing is a vital one and it is so serious as to cause us to wonder about the very future and form of the chamber in which we are speaking today. We see, as preceding members have said, the very fabric of our federation seriously and dangerously undermined at this particular time, and perhaps it would be well in these days of easy accommodation and diplomatic acquiescence to pause for a moment and look at the kind of political structure which is Canada's.

[Mr. Baldwin.]