

We can talk here until we are blue in the face; we can name a civil servant here, and fool around with structures there; we can have committees, special committees and enlarge upon the bureaucracy, and it will all serve for naught unless there is a spirit of goodwill existing in the federal Cabinet directed by the Prime Minister, all wanting to make the system work.

In the last number of years we have seen various approaches to federal-provincial relations. During the years of the late Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson this was called the spirit of co-operative federalism. We saw written on the statute books during that time joint federal-provincial programs that, in my view, embodied all the worst possible aspects, and today problems are coming to roost, costing taxpayers many wasted dollars.

Let us consider medicare, which has already been mentioned this afternoon. I imagine that every member of parliament sitting in this House at the time realized the need to adopt the principle of medicare in this country. What happened was that, without consulting the provinces as to whether plans and personnel were ready, the federal government overnight voted billions of dollars for services that simply were not there.

● (1740)

Without consulting the provinces the government forced them into a joint program. Today we see medical and health care services collapsing in many parts of this country. The inflationary aspect in respect of medicare and health care is now 20 per cent, and yet the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) washes his hands, saying to the provinces that they must sink or swim because it is their responsibility now. The federal government has forced the provinces into these medical programs and today tells them that they must sink or swim, that it is their responsibility despite a 20 per cent inflationary rate in respect of these services in many instances. Especially in respect of the low-income people who were intended to be served, the system is collapsing.

What do we have today after the spirit of co-operative federalism of the late Prime Minister has come to an end? Under the present Prime Minister we have a predilection toward confrontation with the provinces that simply treats them as municipalities, not that municipalities are not important in Canada today.

The federal government is wasting billions of Canadian tax dollars in creating an unnatural and unnecessary state of disunity. What is the situation in the province of Alberta today? It is simply a plain old fashioned power play. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) must realize that it is the federal government that is bringing exploration almost to a halt in that province. When I was in high school and first went to Alberta it was a have-not province, and then it hit oil. The Prime Minister has said that oil is a non-renewable resource and that unless there is exploration, aided and abetted by federal-provincial co-operation, we will run out of oil in eight or nine years. What does the government want? Does it want a central government which pretends that Ottawa has all the answers, and does it want to have Alberta in the position of being a have-not province ten years from now, coming to Ottawa for hand-

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outs, although its present premier is trying to establish a secondary base in order to put that province on its feet?

An hon. Member: Don't get mad.

Mr. Grafftey: Well, you say "don't get mad". What will happen when Mr. Bourassa has a natural resources problem on his hands in one or two years? The minions in the backbenches of the Liberal Party from the province of Quebec I am sure will be singing another tune. So, we have gone from co-operative federalism to a state of confrontation with the provinces, to the detriment of this country in terms of unity. There are many people who say we must stand up and be counted in a debate like this, that is, that we must say whether we take the federal position or the provincial position. I say nonsense. One cannot just say he stands for the provincial or for the federal authority in a case like this.

If someone were to ask me what is the real difference between a Liberal and Conservative in terms of Canadian confederation, I would say that one of the reasons for the disunity in this country today is that the Prime Minister involves the provinces in a power play of confrontation. His view of Canada is that it is one uniform monolith where Ottawa has all the answers. Ottawa does not have all the answers.

[Translation]

Mr. Pelletier (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to the hon. member.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member wishes to put a question but the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi refuses to accept it.

[English]

Mr. Grafftey: We, in the Conservative Party, realize—

An hon. Member: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Grafftey: I will not answer a question at this time.

[Translation]

Mr. Pelletier (Sherbrooke): The hon. member said "yes".

[English]

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Grafftey: I will answer a question later. I realize that being a backbencher in that party is a very boring experience. No matter who the Prime Minister of the day is, he must define and defend the federal cause. But underlying a strong federal authority is not inconsistent with the fact that we should have a decentralized federalism which recognizes local agencies and the desirability of having a healthy and strong local government. The Prime Minister can present a thousand bills to this House to improve, at the bureaucratic level, the structures for federal-provincial relations, but unless he changes his attitude he will be wasting our time and the taxpayers' money.

People often say that Sir John A. Macdonald was a strong federalist. Confederation at that time—and I say "Confederation" not "federation"—was a much different