

National Unity

ing, furniture or shoe industry workers. Let them speak at leisure to them. They will be listened to with such attention, but let them also listen afterwards. Those workers will repeat what they are telling us. The federal government is not discharging its responsibilities, it is letting in imports to compete with our own production, workers are laid off and plants are closing down.

They will tell them for instance that in January 1977, 68 per cent of the Canadian shoe market was occupied by imports. So let us stop dreaming in colour and let us tackle the real causes. Canadian harmony is a very laudable goal to everyone, but under the current constitution, it is sheer utopia. As long as our provinces do not have enough revenues to cope with their responsibilities to the people, there can be no Canadian harmony.

I had an opportunity to follow through as an observer one fiscal federal-provincial conference. Provinces were requiring a larger part of the fiscal basis, but the federal government refused to transfer any more tax revenues because it did not have enough for itself. So the conference ended without solving the problem. In January 1966, at a federal-provincial conference of welfare ministers in Ottawa, Quebec requested no less than the transfer of family allowances, old age security pensions and manpower centres.

At the 1968 federal-provincial conference, Premier Daniel Johnson stated: "The government of Quebec insists on regaining full responsibility for social security for two main reasons. First, the coexistence of two governments in that area hinders efficient social security planning, allows for contradictory programs and leads to administrative duplication and waste. Then because social security measures on the whole affect the nation fundamentally as a society."

The most serious and sound suggestions that were made yesterday by my colleague, the hon. member for Shefford (Mr. Rondeau), should serve as a basis for the drawing up of a new constitution. For my part, I would recommend that the provinces equip themselves with a mechanism having the authority required to call a real summit meeting which would be attended by representatives from all the provinces, the federal government, community organizations, social and cultural organizations, industry, business and finance. Then, the provinces could meet again to draw up a new constitution incorporating the suggestions and recommendations made at the previous meeting. Such a new constitution should spell out as clearly as possible the actual role of the federal and provincial governments. I am convinced that this procedure would afford greater satisfaction and would generate a genuine harmony in this country.

In 1970 a joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons was set up to look into the whole constitutional problem. It submitted a report on March 16, 1972, and each and everyone of us as well as the government would find it profitable to take a second look at it and draw our inspiration from it because the report does contain rather commendable suggestions. However, Mr. Speaker, if we really go to the bottom of things, we will find that the main cause of the lack

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

of understanding between the provinces and the federal government is mainly and above all of a monetary nature.

As long as the federal government will engage in loansharking with the provinces, which means that they have to pay back \$5.00 for each dollar they borrowed, it will not be possible to live in harmony. It is not right that a government should lend money to another government for profit; it should be first and foremost to provide services for the people.

If the legislative, executive and judicial branches of any sovereign government are the powers that be there is another source of power which supersedes governments themselves. This super power which does not proceed from any constitution and which is exercised under no specific conditions or requirements is the monetary power. As monetary matters come under federal jurisdiction, if the federal government were to fulfill all its responsibilities in this area by making this financial system available to governments and to the people, it would largely contribute to the settlement of the constitutional problem.

• (1820)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to him has expired.

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat dismayed at the bitterness of the attack by the opposition on the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). One would be forgiven for concluding that members opposite wanted this debate as an occasion on which to attack and seek to destroy the Prime Minister. That attack will not work. I will not deal with the specific statements which have been made because my hon. friend, the Secretary of State (Mr. Roberts), has dealt with them very effectively.

There was one charge made in the House this afternoon which I believe should not go unanswered. I refer to the attack upon the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) by the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield). I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that on May 27, 1969, in the vote on Bill C-120, "an Act respecting the Status of the Official Languages of Canada," there were 17 members of the Conservative party who voted against that bill, and that at that time the party opposite was led by the hon. member for Halifax. Ten of those members who voted against Bill C-120 are still members of the Conservative caucus today.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, none of us has ever made any personal attack on members over there for the way they voted on any bill.

I am participating in this debate today in order to express some thoughts on the question of national unity from the point of view of a representative from New Brunswick, to try to state what Confederation means to us. First, it means a guarantee of our provincial identity. New Brunswickers, and indeed all