

Interim Supply

responsibility. But after we have worked out all the programs we can on a joint federal-provincial basis, there will always be a need for Canada-wide programs. In these days of mobility of labour there are programs which need to be country-wide in scope. I hope the federal government will retain its right to carry on such programs in the interests of all the people of Canada.

There are many other things which one would like to say on this matter of federal-provincial relations, particularly with reference to the announcement of the offer which the government has made to the provinces under the tax sharing arrangements. I hope the Prime Minister will arrange for a debate at an early date so he can explain to the house the offer he has made to the provinces, why it has been made, and why the government has departed from the original equalization formula which it espoused. I think such a debate would be useful. I hope it will be held soon. I express the hope of this party that out of the federal-provincial conference and the meetings which will subsequently follow, this country will go forward as a united and unified Canada.

Mr. Munro: Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether I could ask the hon. member a question.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. member's time had expired. The hon. member for Hamilton East cannot ask a question unless there is the unanimous consent of the committee. Does the committee give unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

The Chairman: I hear dissenting voices; therefore I recognize the hon. member for Quebec-Montmorency.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcoux: Mr. Chairman, without taking too much time, I should like to make a few comments following the speech made by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas).

In spite of what he said, I do not think everybody in Canada has the same conception of Canadian federalism and also of the authority and autonomy of the provinces.

Personally, I believe that confederation resulted from an agreement reached between different provinces to achieve a common goal. It was not a question of losing an identity which already existed, but simply of working together to succeed in doing certain things which the provinces could not have accomplished individually.

Obviously, the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam is angry at himself for preaching centralization but, while refusing to accept it, he is advocating measures of an increasingly centralizing nature.

While almost all the component parts of confederation are now in favour of decentralization, because the common good to which we attach the greatest importance is the one closest to us, the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam would like the federal government to take much more vigorous stands in many fields which, normally, should be none of its concern.

As an example, he referred to the European countries which set up the European economic community. The example is a good one in a way, as long as it is realized that the European economic community will be strong to the extent that each of its members is strong. That is why, when France, England or Germany are economically strengthened, it gives the whole community much greater strength.

By the same token, when the hon. member claims that the tax capacity should be adequate to enable the federal government to carry out any activity it would like to carry out, I say to him that the capacity to pay of the whole country can be no greater than the capacity to pay of each of the parts which make up that country. That is why Social Credit always criticized our present economic system under which no matter where the taxation system is placed, no matter the priority given to the central government, the provincial government or the municipal government, we will always be facing the same problem which is to pay interests and carry a debt that we cannot carry any more than the federal government itself.

We know for instance that last year, the national debt went up by some \$760 million and that at the same time, the federal government had to pay close to \$800 million in interests on the debt.

We wonder where is the deficit and why the government cannot make progress in the economic field. Well, one does not have to do much searching, because the figures released in the public accounts of Canada are so clear and so obvious that they enable us to readily realize where the problem lies and why the government cannot meet its obligations. It is not because the provinces want too much, not because the municipalities want too much, not because the federal government wants too much, but rather because our present economic system is wrong and neither planning nor centralization nor any of the other proposals put forward by the hon. member could settle that.

That is a typically and purely economic problem. Of course, to that economic problem,