

*The Address—Mr. Balcer*

intended to improve the National Housing Act has been well received probably everywhere. Unfortunately, as long as our municipalities are in such a financial situation, they won't be able to take advantage of the proposed legislation for they are unable to find the means necessary to supply the municipal services which housing projects may require.

There are many associations or groups of businessmen who would like to undertake the building of multiple or single dwelling units but they are prevented from doing so because municipalities are unable to ensure proper services not having the means to levy funds for these purposes. This problem is extremely acute in Three Rivers, more so than anywhere else in this country.

As a matter of fact I should think that the families in Three Rivers are among the worst housed in this country. That is why I would like our whole fiscal system to be reviewed in order to allow municipalities the financial means to discharge their responsibilities to the benefit of their ratepayers. Is that not something to which every citizen of a democratic and prosperous country like ours is entitled?

The lamentable financial state of the municipalities is therefore evidence that a new conference is essential so that our federal fiscal system may be reviewed, and with an open mind, in order that each administrative body, either federal, provincial or municipal should be in a position to be master of its own destinies and in order that everyone be treated with justice and equity.

I sincerely believe that the Liberal government would make a serious mistake in interpreting its victory of last summer as an approval of its fiscal policy by the people of Quebec, for federal-provincial relations still remain an acute problem. All public organizations and bodies in the province of Quebec recognize that this matter should be settled once and for all, for the federal-provincial relations will not be settled by mere subsidies from the central government. These grants are contrary to the spirit which inspired the fathers of confederation and merely tend to make of Canada a centralizing country, that is to say a country having only one government.

Let us not forget that if the Quebec people have been enthusiastic about accepting confederation, it is because they thought that this federative pact would allow them to pursue their evolution as an ethnical unit, while at the same time remaining part of a whole. Each time the federal government

infringes upon provincial rights or tolerates the provinces remaining in a subservient position it deviates from the policy set by the fathers of confederation, and even if it follows it to the letter, it is unfaithful to its spirit.

Unfortunately, the speech from the throne says nothing about a federal-provincial conference, and we all know that the people of Quebec would like such a conference to be called, in order to allow the governments concerned to reach some kind of agreement. Each particular government must be able to collect the moneys which it needs for the conduct of its affairs, and I deem it to be anti-democratic when in a federal state one of the component parts is forced to come and beg regularly from the other part the necessary funds.

I think that the federal government departs from the principles of the constitution when it lays its hands on all sources of taxation, exhausts them and then meddles in fields of activity that are not its concern, even if it offers sums of money. There is a way to settle the matter once and for all. The provinces should have the authority to levy themselves the money they need; they would, in turn, give the municipalities their autonomy and, in this way, a certain balance would be possible. I am sure it would benefit our Canadian democracy.

The federal government has, no doubt, many fine gifts to offer, and is always ready to meddle in fields that do not concern it, tendering a few millions here and there. Nothing is easier than giving, and I am sure that the provincial government of Quebec would wish for nothing better than to give too.

I think that a government which has been elected by the taxpayers of the country should, before giving away anything to Tom, Dick, and Harry, make sure that it can do it.

The province of Quebec does not ask the federal government to go into bankruptcy in order to save the institutions of that province, far from it. It simply wishes that the federal government withdraw from the taxation fields where it does not belong and allow Quebec to collect the amounts it needs to enable it to distribute various grants to the universities and classical colleges of the province and to ensure the progress of the educational system.

Mr. Gerard Filion stated very well the opinion of the population of Quebec when he wrote in *Le Devoir* on November 4, 1953, the following comments:

Nobody is asking the federal government to go into bankruptcy for the sake of the provinces, the municipalities or the school boards. It is being asked however to desist from forcing into receivership the lower levels of administration. There is