

*Federal-Provincial Relations*

In the debate on the Speech from the Throne I expressed my misgivings about federal-provincial conferences, these ad hoc arrangements designed to deal with fundamental problems, and I still have those misgivings. I do not see how we can hope to resolve a lot of the problems associated with our federal system by such conferences, and in my view it is necessary that we try to clarify federal and provincial jurisdictions. We need to undertake a total view of the disposition of authority and responsibility, something I also mentioned in the Throne Speech debate.

It seems to me imperative that jurisdiction between the provincial and federal level be both separate and discrete, that is, discernible one from the other, and the concept of co-operative federalism, although it played an important role in a recent stage of our evolution, is one about which I have certain misgivings. I say that conditions of survival for a viable federal system involve certain prerequisites.

● (6:30 p.m.)

In the first instance there must be a certain uniform pattern of distribution of authority between the provincial and federal governments. It is to me inconsistent with a viable federal system that certain authority will exist at the federal level, whereas that same authority in the case of a particular province would be undertaken by a particular province. This introduces an inconsistency in the distribution of power and one which I think in time will undermine the federal system. It is for this reason I have said outside the house, and would like to say inside the house, that I particularly am opposed to the concept of a special status for any province, and I would include of course the province of Quebec.

It seems to me the very concept of a special status will accomplish the very objective that the concept itself is trying to obviate; namely, the two nations theory. It seems to me that eventually two nations will result from applying the concept of special status.

Furthermore, it is heretical, in this sense, that so long as you accept the proposition of a special status for Quebec you are implying or directly saying that Quebec is the instrument, and must be the instrument, of the French-Canadian population of this country. That identification is anathema to me and it is heresy to any legitimate federalist, if I may be presumptuous enough to go that far. It is a thing which worries me. I reject the idea that

somehow the expression of French Canadians must be in any way exclusively identified with the provincial government of the province of Quebec.

The second need for a viable federal system—and particularly of our own federal system—is of course the need for a re-distribution of authority between the federal and provincial governments to bring our federal system in line with 20th century problems. The distribution we are working under today applies to conditions which existed a long time ago. I have suggested that we should have a constitutional conference. I am not sure this is a sound suggestion,—it may prove to be traumatic—but certainly a constitutional committee of the house would make a great deal of sense to me to deal with this problem of the distribution of authority so that that authority can be placed clearly at one level. I am thinking of such things as the responsibility for water resources, air pollution and things of this nature.

Finally, I would like to deal with another dimension of this problem which I think in this house we have not discussed, because after all it is not a constitutional problem. It is our problem, namely, that in a viable federal system there must be a policy initiative at the federal level. I was interested in the remarks made by the member for Peace River when he discussed his particular notice of motion on February 14 at page 1182 of *Hansard*:

Let the government of Canada take the initiative for once. Let them be strong, decisive and resolute.

These are fine sentiments.

Who knows, they might even seize upon this as an opportunity to test the bold and excite the daring. I am sure if they do so they will secure from many members.—

I am assuming that applies to both sides of the house.

—certainly from me, such measure of support as they may require.

The fact of the matter is that was said sometime ago, almost a month ago. Since that time this house has been pre-occupied with last year's estimates. It seems to me to be inconsistent that the hon. member for Peace River can encourage the federal government in these terms to take an initiative in that direction which will excite the bold or challenge the daring, whichever way he put it, and at the same time persist in discussion of last year's estimates. This may be the assessment of a new and naïve member, but it