

premiers of the provinces will get to know each other better and will accept more readily some changes suggested by the federal government.

But, with regard to Quebec—must we repeat it a thousand times—in the briefs submitted by four different governments, the same consistent thinking appears with the request for transfer of certain powers made the federal government.

As a Quebecer, I recognize that my first duty is to answer the requests made by the government of my province. I think that these justifiable requests of Quebec would not adversely affect the building of our country, Canada.

Of course, the reluctance shown by federal governments—and I am not indicting only this government—about the requests made by some provinces, Quebec especially—in view of its particularities—has produced, whether you like or not, an independentist party in Quebec.

These things must be said. I mention them because I think that it is important that all hon. members be well informed about Quebec.

It has been said over again that the *Parti Québécois* only had 7 members elected, but it is giving improper information to the House when you limit yourself to such a statement.

I believe that we should not conceal the truth but openly say that this party has nevertheless won 23 per cent of the popular vote in Quebec in the last election. And that percentage was increased on the occasion of two by-elections a few months later.

To claim that the *Parti Québécois* in Quebec is unimportant is to be dishonest. To admit that that party could become the official opposition if there is reluctance in meeting certain demands from Quebec, I believe is conceivable.

But such a drive can be slowed down. We should seriously consider the possibility of responding in a positive way to the requests of the present Quebec government, which are the same as those expressed by the three previous provincial governments.

I should like special consideration to be given to the requests from the Quebec minister of Social Affairs who spent ten years devising a plan geared to the future of Quebecers in a Canadian context. As Quebec representatives, it is our duty to see to it that the Federal government accepts to grant the powers Quebec claims because the Quebecers future will be conditioned by them.

I was surprised to learn recently that the Federal-Provincial affairs Secretariat had been abolished. As if those federal or provincial problems did not exist anymore. We need a permanent secretariat more and more if those negotiations are to be permanent also. How can federal-provincial relations be improved if we deprive ourselves of a somewhat experienced body that allowed us to maintain regular relations?

Not long ago, Mr. Chairman, considering the present circumstances where certain assertions can be heard either in Quebec or in Ottawa, I had hoped for regular meetings to take place between both groups of Quebec members at the federal as well as the provincial level.

Federal-Provincial Relations

I realize that this suggestion was ratified right away by the Quebec Chamber of Commerce which in a resolution, asked Mr. Bourassa to set up consulting machinery in order to prevent statements such as those which we have heard recently, from causing clashes and engendering a climate where bargaining would become more and more difficult. And I also realize that the Quebec premier yesterday replied positively to the resolution to the effect that it is essential to increase machinery for consultation with Ottawa in order to avoid useless tensions within federalism. For the last three weeks, we have heard such statements, an undeniable proof that some concern exists about the present federalism.

Instead of condemning federalism and being satisfied with criticizing without providing any solution, I should rather urge hon. members to earnestly consider those problems and try to cooperate in finding consulting machinery that would alleviate such clashes and in due course help Quebec members in this House as well as in the Quebec legislature recognize their respective responsibilities and cooperate with a view to ensure that the province of Quebec has a fair, valid and worthwhile representation, which, finally, would benefit the whole country.

Mr. Speaker, I do hope that this debate on federal-provincial relations will result in positive suggestions for the good of all Canadian people.

I note that it is six o'clock and, since my time has not expired, I shall resume my remarks at eight o'clock.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at eight o'clock.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

Mr. La Salle: Mr. Speaker, in my opinion the economic problems have priority everywhere in this country.

The motion we are now studying deals with federal-provincial matters and is closely related to these problems. We talk about regional disparities and we try through every means to eliminate them. I also acknowledge that the problem of economic stability is the most important issue if we look at it from the international point of view.

Perhaps we should remember that in the present economic situation, we should not forget that in the province of Quebec the economic problems are very important and of a constitutional nature.

As far as the people of Quebec are concerned, it is impossible not to give very serious consideration to constitutional problems and difficulties. It does not mean that people in Quebec do not wish for economic stability enabling them to have as high a standard of living as anywhere else, but in view of the objectives of the population, we must also consider constitutional changes. This particular situation is not looked upon in the same way by