

Quebec and France Exchange of Letters

The French and Quebec authorities also contemplate co-operation in the use of the Franco-German *Symphonie* experimental satellite and envisage studies relating to a possible France-Quebec communications satellite.

In this connection I should reiterate that the Canadian government has adopted, in the matter of space communications, a very active policy consistent with its exclusive responsibilities for telecommunications and with the interests of the country including those of Quebec and of French Canadians throughout the land. I might mention, as is well known to members of this house, that a third Canadian satellite was put into orbit just a few days ago.

We have established ourselves as pioneers in space research and have had exchanges for years with a number of leading countries in this field, France included. As a matter of fact three French engineers have come to Canada for training. As for the *Symphonie* program, we have long since indicated to the governments involved Canada's willingness to consider the extent to which Canadian co-operation might prove beneficial to all concerned. What is required in my view is a willingness to approach in a generally co-operative spirit the various projects contemplated in this field where the Canadian government has an essential role to play. This will guarantee maximum effectiveness in achieving the common objectives of the government's concerned and, I may add, maximum economy which I am sure appeals to the government of Quebec just as much as it appeals to the Government of Canada.

In this instance it seems to me that as the participation of the federal government will be required in any satellite scheme and therefore consultations will of necessity be involved, it would have been preferable for the Quebec government to be willing to take into its confidence the government of the country and to disclose its intentions before making them known and including them in letters of intent to the government of another country. This is all the more true since the plans concerning the visit to Paris and the satellite arrangements were apparently approved by the Quebec government months ago.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I received the text of the minister's remarks just as I entered the house. They concern a subject of some complexity and consequently my remarks may not

[Mr. Sharp.]

be quite as profound as they usually are on a subject of this sort. But there are one or two points I would like to make in a constructive manner, and not so as to contribute in any way to an escalation or a deepening of the difficulties that already exist. Certainly I want to make the point beyond any doubt that whatever happens the essential authority of the government of Canada in connection with foreign policy and diplomatic relations must be preserved. But there has obviously been a dispute for some time between the government of Quebec and the Government of Canada as to the circumstances and the degree to which it is proper for a provincial government to have dealings abroad. There are some real doubts in this field, some of which cannot be satisfied. As I understand it, for example, it is not possible today for the government of Canada to sign an international agreement which involves a provincial legislature to carry out such an agreement. I do not think we can regard such a gap as entirely satisfactory in a country such as ours.

• (11:20 a.m.)

I think there is also a genuine question as to how we really achieve representation abroad in a field entirely within the provincial jurisdiction and how we really establish a delegation that can represent Canada in this area. I do not ask these questions to be controversial but simply for the purpose of stressing the importance of these matters being seriously and urgently discussed. I hope that the federal-provincial conference in February will discuss these matters between the Government of Canada and all the provinces, not simply in the form of a confrontation but with a view to de-escalating the dispute that has been taking place, and to try to reach a firm and satisfactory understanding in these areas under dispute.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this matter being resolved. I do not for a moment minimize the difficulty about reaching a complete solution, or expect a complete solution to be reached in the course of one federal-provincial conference, but I do stress the hope that this subject will be on the agenda and that any discussions which take place at the federal-provincial conference will be seriously followed up. We do want genuine co-operation; we do want to eliminate all possible areas of dispute between the federal government and the provinces; we do want to eliminate any grey areas which may exist and which may lead to further disputes.