

The Address—Mr. Prittie

to the provinces of great sums of money, and that there is a provincial veto over all that we in this parliament try to do.

Further, he suggested this:

But, I suggest, there are also national problems with which the government of Canada and the parliament of Canada must have the power and resources to deal. This parliament cannot be allowed to become simply the rubber stamp for ten provincial premiers. I can assure them that the people of this country look to us in this parliament to solve some of the problems besetting Canada. We must be free, I suggest, to enact solutions.

I quite agree with the sentiments expressed by the hon. member, and I suggest that most people in English speaking Canada take that point of view. In my remarks I want to deal with what I believe are the attitudes of the people in English speaking Canada on this question of the power of the federal government versus the provincial governments. I am specifically leaving out of this question the people of Quebec because I do not know—I am not being facetious when I say this—and I am wondering whether anybody does, what they think about this subject at this time, including the members who come from that province; because they are in a period of change. So I am specifically leaving out public opinion in that province because I do not know what it is, but I have some idea of what it is in the rest of the country.

I am reasonably sure that many people in this country are fed up with the posturings of the provincial premiers.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Prittie: These gentlemen seem to have delusions of grandeur. They think they have a mandate from their people to make life miserable for the federal government, and I suggest this is not the case at all. They act as if they were the heads of sovereign states. A few months ago Mr. Peter Regenstreif, who is a graduate of McGill University, now a teacher at the University of Rochester, who has done a considerable amount of writing on federal-provincial relations, conducted a poll in several parts of Canada to find out the attitudes of people vis-à-vis the federal government and the provincial governments. As far as English speaking Canada is concerned there was no doubt about the result of that poll; it confirmed that the people in the English speaking provinces consider the government in Ottawa to be more important to them than their provincial governments. They look to the government in Ottawa to take the lead in solving social and economic problems. I have conducted my own poll in various parts of the country and have asked

people this question, and again the result was unmistakable; they look to Ottawa in these matters.

People are naturally pragmatic; they are more interested in solutions to problems than in constitutional arguments. For example, it seems to me that when a lady in Halifax, Toronto, Vancouver or Calgary receives a family allowance cheque every month, she does not say this sort of thing: "Here is another cheque from those nasty centralizers in Ottawa. I would be much happier if it came from my provincial capital". People do not think like that at all. They are interested in the money and not the constitutional arrangements. Yet this is the type of argument which seems to be advanced in connection with the Canada pension plan and in connection with the proposed loans for students.

The other day the hon. member for Three Rivers spoke on this subject, and I must say in passing that I was a little disappointed at his speech after the stirring speech which he made here last fall for national unity. But in this speech the other day, February 27, he seemed to revert to the old argument denouncing the centralizers, which is what his party does in opposition but not when it is in power. He referred to the invasion of provincial rights in connection with the loan fund. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the people in Canada generally will look upon the loan fund for students in the same way as they look upon family allowances and unemployment insurance; they want to have it and they are not too interested in constitutional arguments. But I do think that most people would prefer that this be handled on a national basis. This is the way in which unemployment insurance is handled, although I realize there were constitutional amendments to make it possible. This is the way in which family allowances are handled, and I think this is the way we want to handle the portable pensions.

Mr. Douglas: And loans to farmers and small businessmen.

Mr. Prittie: Quite. I do not think we should have to consult the provinces every time we want to act. I am absolutely sure that this is the opinion which is held in at least nine of the provinces of Canada; as I say, I am not sure about the other province.

I suggest to the government that if they feel it is necessary, they should consult with the provinces in connection with the loan fund for university students; but if the provinces are too difficult or put too many obstacles in the way, then I say forget about the provinces and deal directly with the students. The provinces will have no complaint as long as there is no invasion of