

The Address—Mr. Pearson

the government, and what they would do, I hope, for national welfare, as well as what they would do to strengthen national unity. But I am very much aware, as I am sure hon. members are, that the solution of all these problems of welfare, of unity, central to the solution of these problems and indeed of national survival, is the relationship between the federal and provincial governments. This is one aspect, though a very important aspect, of the unity and the strength of the confederation of our country.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we must strengthen and improve the federal-provincial relationship in our country so that all Canadians may feel that they are equally served and equally benefited by confederation. I believe that the policies and practices to this end must be based on the principle of what we call co-operative federalism, which is the only kind of federalism which will insure progress and maintain unity. In our confederation, by the very nature of federalism itself, the powers and responsibilities of the state are divided between two sets, two levels of authority. In the earlier days of small and relatively uncomplicated government, this division of jurisdiction was reasonably simple and clear-cut. The total role of government in those days was relatively unimportant, unimportant enough at least for its two major parts to be separated and to operate without treading too much on each other's toes or getting into each other's way or even into each other's hair too much. Therefore, this kind of nineteenth century live and let live federalism with which we in Canada began our great national venture, as difficult a one as ever faced a free people. I believe that our federalism was wisely designed for the time and that it has served Canada well. But it has been apparent surely for many years that the growing scope and scale of government was making the old federalism more and more difficult to operate at both levels of government, provincial and federal. As the demands of the electorate, became more and more concerned with and responsible for measures designed to insure the welfare of the individual, toe-treading became inevitably more common, at times accompanied by a little head shaking and even arm twisting.

Depression and war, of course, have obscured the picture for so many years and made it appear—depression and war made it appear—that the natural and perhaps widest adaptation to big government was greater and greater at the centre, where vastly greater revenues had to be raised and much more im-

portant decisions had to be taken which involved the very existence of the nation. Consequently, Mr. Speaker, during and after the war, the federal government was, again with some misgivings in certain quarters, given more financial and political responsibility for the new services that the public wanted in areas of overlapping jurisdiction and of mutual concern.

This trend was not one that could or should continue indefinitely. It could not go very far in normal times, under normal conditions, without producing a strong reaction for the very good reason that excessive centralization would cut across the basis of the political consent on which our confederation rests. It is true that economies of large scale operation and mass communication today exercise strong pressures toward unity. But it is equally true that in a country so large as ours, dual in its origin and in its partnership, multiple and diverse in its composition and its development, its interests and in its traditions, governmental authority and responsibility should in large measure be dispersed. A system which would ignore or reject this need for dispersion would destroy and not strengthen confederation. Those, in my view, who preach the overcentralizing doctrine in the interests of unity or in some other interests weaken unity and might even destroy it.

Mr. Diefenbaker: You did not hold that view in 1950.

Mr. Pearson: I find it difficult, Mr. Speaker, to recall everything I said in 1950. I have held this view all my life, that in the interests of unity there must be the recognition of the need for avoiding overcentralization. But the resistance to undesirable centralization cannot, in my view, mean a return to the "live and let live" federalism to which I have referred earlier. Federal-provincial responsibilities cannot any longer be divided into two neat and separated compartments so that the people responsible for one can go about their business with little thought for what is being done by people on the other side of the wall. Contemporary government at all levels is now far more concerned with positive measures than before, and in these positive measures, problems are shared and responsibilities for them become mingled and, indeed, overlap. What one level of government does, even if strictly within its own jurisdiction, often has an intimate bearing on the problems with which the other has

[Mr. Pearson.]