

*Federal-Provincial Relations*

**Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain):** That is a very serious undermining of the power and prerogatives of this place. My colleague for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) calls it a contempt for parliament, and I think that is literally what it is. I do not think it is the purpose of ministers deliberately to tear down parliament, but I think this is what is happening. Over a period of time they have started to pay more attention and to attribute more seriousness to issues raised by premiers, in private or public conferences, than to representations made by the people who are elected to this House from those regions where these issues arise.

● (1730)

There is a danger that, by creating this special office we are speaking of today, we are going to contribute and add to that process of bringing down the authority of parliament, and making it easy for the government to by-pass this place which is, in theory and in fact, the most effective arena and institution to control a government given to excess.

The hon. member for Scarborough East spoke about complexities when he defended the establishment of a special office for federal-provincial relations. As I recall from sitting in the gallery at that time, the present Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald), when he had responsibility as House leader, spoke of the complexities which parliament and the government must face when he proposed the changes to the rules of this House. Whenever there is an attempt to downgrade or by-pass parliament the excuse is complexity, that events are coming on too fast and are too complicated for this Chamber to handle. That bespeaks the assumption that parliament cannot deal with complexity, and that assumption, so long as it is in the saddle, is literally fatal to this system.

That assumption ensures that we will continue to be undermined and that the powers of this institution will continue to go down. As I say, I think that is a danger in the institution we are establishing today, particularly since this new office will be answerable only to a prime minister who is not in any practical way answerable to this House of Commons.

I want to repeat what we all know, that we are not a federal system by accident, we are a federal system because we have to be. This is a highly diverse country which requires a government that is in tune with its diversities. It is certain to all of us, I think, that this parliament is the best representation of diversity, drawing as it does individuals from every locality in the land, and paying attention, as its tradition insists, to the rights of those individuals to speak on behalf of their localities. No other agency of government does this, and it cannot be guaranteed in the public service where people in order to become promoted to levels of effective decision making have to live here so long they forget where they came from, Mr. Speaker. This cannot be done either in private conferences, involving various premiers. It cannot be done with guarantees in any other but this forum.

The strength of parliament is not an academic thing at all. It is important to the very roots of this federal country. Every time we wear it down or by-pass parliament, and every time we set up agencies to deal with problems that

[Mr. Mazankowski.]

are too complex for parliament, we literally put federalism into danger, as well as damage the parliamentary system of government to which we claim allegiance.

My point in this intervention, which has gone on longer than I intended, is that there has been a range of serious changes in the way in which we have been governed in this country in the last ten years. Since I came here in 1972, and during the longer period when I was watching events from the gallery, this is the only time at which parliament itself has had the chance to pass judgment on the growth of power. The other powers have been developed without recourse to parliament, and without our having the opportunity to debate them and to express whatever concerns we had. What is remarkable about this bill is not that it has come before us, but that so many other bills which should have come before us did not. With so many of the powers of the Prime Minister and the executive being developed in this country without recourse to the House of Commons, this is a very serious situation.

I hope that when this bill reaches the committee we will be able to review not only the powers that will attach to this new official, not only his relation to the Prime Minister, but also we will be able to review the range of powers of people and agencies appointed by the executive, so that we can begin to achieve the balance which was written into this system when it began—a balance between the executive and elected representatives of this very diverse country.

[Translation]

**Mr. Heward Grafftey (Brome-Missisquoi):** Mr. Speaker, the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has surely presented this afternoon a most interesting bill which, I hope, will help tremendously in securing more effective relations between the central government and the provinces.

I hope the right hon. Prime Minister, perhaps with the assistance of the official who will be appointed under the bill before the House this afternoon, will ponder the problems now opposing Ottawa to the provinces, realizing that here in Canada we have what I call and have always called a confederation that creates our provinces as provinces in the real meaning of the word, in a spirit that acknowledges that here in Canada we have two official languages and several provinces.

It is my hope that according to the intent of the bill, the government will in the future take into consideration the problems and relations now existing between Ottawa and the provinces, while realizing that Canada is not a federation in which provinces should be confronted as, for instance, mere municipalities.

[English]

It has often been said that Canada is one of the most over-governed and over-taxed countries in the free western world. I hope the legislation presented this afternoon by the right hon. Prime Minister will help somewhat to alleviate this situation. Let us be sure of one thing; no matter what we do to change structures, whether inside or outside this House, vis-à-vis ameliorating federal-provincial relations, no structure will help unless the spirit of goodwill rests within the federal Cabinet.