

Dominion-Provincial Relations

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could I, on occasion, talk about Mr. Duplessis?

An hon. Member: Do not split our ears—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member, I think, does not need very special instructions to know what is relevant or what is not. I trust he will obey the rules.

An hon. Member: He could seek advice from the member for Roberval (Mr. Tremblay).

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, what grieves me, is that I was about to pay some compliments to my hon. friends opposite. If I am allowed to go on, I may have a chance to pay them some compliments, because, now that Mr. Duplessis is no longer with us, certain members who I thought were serious and for whom I have great regard—that is the compliment I wanted to pay to them—are venting their overflowing spleen on this great man. I wonder why they persist in insulting the memory of Mr. Duplessis. What is their interest in doing so, if not an antiquated backward and outmoded conception of the ways to influence public opinion?

Do the Liberal members really believe they are helping the provincial Liberal party?

Finally, do they really believe they are serving Canada, our country? Do they feel that in this way they are serving the national unity which they claim as their handiwork?

(Text):

Mr. Erhart Regier (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I want to take only a few minutes to offer my congratulations to the government and also to the government of the province of Quebec on having resolved what has been for a long time one of the knottiest problems that the nation has had. I understand that the agreement arrived at was basically designed by the government of the province of Quebec and I believe that the acceptance of this agreement by the federal government and the provincial government of Quebec is going to be a most noteworthy and welcome milestone in both national development and the development of national unity in Canada. It can be the beginning of much greater areas of agreement in the years to come.

I completely fail to understand the attitude of the Liberal opposition in the House of Commons. The acting leader of the Liberals, the hon. member for Laurier (Mr. Chevrier), made some rather radical statements in expressing his attitude toward this legislation. As found on page 3282 of *Hansard* of April 26, he said:

This is, to say the least, a fantastic piece of legislation. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that no other federal government or minister of finance since confederation has dared to intervene so emphatically, so evidently and so thoroughly in an exclusively provincial matter.

On the next page he went on to say:

—I believe that several provisions of this bill constitute the worst intrusion ever attempted by a federal government in the affairs of a province.

As we understand the situation, the solution now being offered is by mutual agreement and when a solution is arrived at by mutual agreement I cannot appreciate how at one and the same time it can be called the worst intrusion ever attempted by a federal government in the affairs of a province. According to the Liberals, apparently it is perfectly all right to tax the people of Quebec in order to pay grants to universities elsewhere in Canada; apparently that is the Liberal version of national unity. We do not believe it is right to tax the people of Quebec in order to help finance universities in other areas of Canada when universities in the province of Quebec cannot obtain the same assistance.

Mr. Crestohl: May I ask the hon. member a question?

Mr. Regier: Yes.

Mr. Crestohl: Does the hon. member mean to imply that because there is an agreement between the two parties that necessarily makes it constitutional?

Mr. Regier: I did not say that that makes it constitutional. What I did say was that to tax people of Quebec against their will for aid to universities elsewhere while such aid is being denied to their own universities is a worse intrusion in the affairs and the autonomy of a province than is the method now being offered for the consideration of the house.

Mr. Leduc: What about the trans-Canada highway and hospital insurance?

Mr. Regier: If this indeed is fantastic legislation, if this indeed is not a step in the right direction, if in the opinion of the Liberal party it constitutes the worst intrusion, then all I can say is that the method under which they operated for so many years at the expense of national unity and to the detriment of the interests of the people of Quebec was a much greater offence against national unity than is this legislation. If the Liberals want to vote against this bill, if they want to put themselves on record as being unalterably opposed to what in the course of Canadian history will turn out to be one of the greatest steps in the development of national unity; if the Liberal party