



CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 64/19

CO-OPERATIVE FEDERALISM: COLLECTIVE SUICIDE OR LIFE RENEWED?

Speech by the Honourable Maurice Lamontagne,
Secretary of State of Canada, to the Richelieu
Club of Quebec, Quebec City, September 9, 1964.

When I received your kind invitation to speak to you about co-operative federalism, I could not help but think of the address on the same subject given to this same body by the president of the Federation of Saint-Jean-Baptiste Societies of Quebec on August 5 last. At that time, Mr. Fortin stated that co-operative federalism was "a smoke-screen obscuring basic issues", "that it does not solve the problem of centralization", "that it is a product for local consumption", "that it would gradually bring about Quebec's isolation" and "that it rests on men rather than on judicial authority".

I have no intention of meeting Mr. Fortin's arguments. Instead, I shall recall briefly the main stages in the progress of our political system since 1867, explain the nature of co-operative federalism, and describe the chief results it has achieved since its inception, barely a year ago. I shall then leave it to you to decide for yourselves whether this new form of federalism constitutes a threat of collective suicide for French-Canadians, or, as Mr. Daniel Johnson claims, "a coffin for the rights of Quebec", especially when this new form of federalism is compared with that which existed prior to 1963.

Period of Federal Predominance

From 1867 to 1920, the Central Government was predominant within our federal system. The political union concluded in 1867 was a compromise between legislative union and simple federation. The Federal Government took upon itself the main functions of state at that time and was given powers of control and supervision over provincial legislatures. It was called on to transform the former colonies into a common market, to give them the same currency, to expand their territories from the Atlantic to the Pacific, to promote their development by completing the railway and canal systems, to promote population increase through immigration, and to protect a budding industry by means of a tariff structure. To this