

The Address—Mr. Gingues

All those who know your old seminary will easily understand that. To all those from other parts of the country who do not know it, I must say that you were a bright student, always getting the highest honours in your class, and that since you left St. Charles, you have been the model of all Borromeans. As the Bishop of Sherbrooke said one day, and I quote:

Your conduct has made of you an example to follow, a model to imitate, and all this because of the integrity of your life, of your frankness, of your fondness for truth.

The eastern townships, your seminary and Sherbrooke are proud of you. You can rely on our support. We know you and we like your frankness. Politics needs men like you.

Mr. Speaker, in 1945, a federal-provincial conference was held in Ottawa during which the federal government made certain proposals to the provinces. Unfortunately for the aged, the sick and the invalid, unfortunately for the economic future of the country, the two wealthiest provinces refused to co-operate and, in the case of Quebec, counter-proposals were not even submitted. Since then, the government is being branded as a centralizing power, as the enemy of the provinces.

And yet, Mr. Speaker, if we consider the generous way in which the federal government have contributed to social security, assistance to the young, and through many other pieces of legislation, we must recognize the fact that the central government have only performed those functions which are assigned to them in the constitution, and that they never attempted to encroach upon provincial rights.

I sometimes wonder why the provincial government has not yet called a provincial-municipal conference. The time has come for provincial authorities to invite the mayors to discuss municipal finances. The provincial government should restore their autonomy to the cities and towns of Quebec.

Recently, the cities of the eastern townships attempted, one after the other, to introduce a bill in the Quebec legislature in order to obtain the power to amend their charter and levy a 2 per cent sales tax. They were compelled, however, to withdraw the measure on account of the protests from their citizens. They will have to solve their financial problems in some other way. The 2 per cent sales tax levied by the provincial government in the city of Sherbrooke yields about \$300,000 per year.

Do you not think, Mr. Speaker, that if a provincial-municipal conference were called where the Quebec government would offer to share this revenue with the cities, the latter would be able to meet their present obligations and plan for their future development?

The same applies to the tax on gasoline, which brings in good money, half of which is paid by city dwellers. Since cities must undertake the building and upkeep of their streets, do you not think that the provincial government infringes upon municipal autonomy in refusing to share this revenue with them?

Those who loudly clamour for autonomy should, to my mind, start by having regard for the autonomy of the government closest to the people, the municipal government. We know our cities are hard put to it to balance their budgets, that they cannot further increase the real estate levy and are duty bound to pay adequate wages to their employees.

How can they be expected to carry out all their responsibilities if the provincial government keeps on draining the sources of income at their disposal? I suggest that the municipalities demand a conference with the provincial government. We shall then see which government most encroaches on the autonomy of others.

Such a conference would also compel realization of the fact that, in our country, all governments—federal, provincial and municipal—must co-operate. This co-operation, on the part of every government, is indispensable if the true interest of the country is to be served. That is, after all, in the interests of every Canadian.

The federal government, it seems to me, has been, up to now, worthy of its responsibilities. However I feel it to be its duty today to alleviate the burden of taxation which the Canadian people have borne with so much courage. Speaking for my constituents, I request the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) to increase the income tax exemptions so as to raise the morale of our people, inspire confidence in the future and bring about those undertakings upon which depends the future development of our great country.

It must not be forgotten that a disheartened people is a people whose collective will may obey any impulse and may accept any belief, even communism, whilst a people whose morale is excellent pays no attention whatever to any dangerous ideology, because such a people is confident and is constantly striving to better its position without fearing that its efforts will be futile.