

*Federal-Provincial Relations*

ible. Quite the contrary, he is very flexible. It is only necessary to realize the evolution of the discussions, the constitutional debates, to see to what extent the federal government went in order to reach agreements with the provinces.

So, Mr. Speaker, the fields in which there are agreements with the provinces are really many. In spite of all that is said, the provinces are growing stronger and richer, and the same goes for the Canadian people. That does not mean that all is perfect, that there is no unemployment. It is generally known that some go to remote rural areas where they spread rumours: I know, because I have been there after them.

Some people say: in my time, butter cost 25 cents a pound, I myself have known those conditions. We froze in winter, and had to break the ice in the morning to be able to wash up a bit; at night time, we used coal oil lamps. I am sorry, I cannot agree, as I must say that life is now considerably more pleasant than it was 50 years ago. The unemployed suffer less; our welfare system, although not perfect, is obviously superior to the one we had at that time. People are not driven to public begging as they used to be, which does not mean that there is no more destitution, but it is not as serious as the professional scarecrows would like to make us believe.

The motion deals with federal-provincial relations. If we continue to act as we have so far, I am convinced that our federation will operate very well. There will be some conflicts among individuals, whichever federal government is in power. Indeed, some people always interfere with other people's business, but they are told to remain quiet. It is not tragic!

If we had to note all the silly things which are said especially in the province of Quebec by those who protest most strongly, namely the movers of that resolution, we would be surprised! Some people will say: We cannot live side by side, we will go at each other's throat. If we are looking for a speeches stuffed with viciousness and aggressivity, we have only to refer to those delivered by members of the Social Credit Party. Indeed they are the ones who are saying: Dear me, the Prime Minister is so rude; he has been a little rough with the provinces.

Come now, Mr. Speaker, let us be a little more responsible: he is just a man and as such he may knock things over, sometimes.

But on the whole, the provinces can stand on their own two feet. Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec can stand on their own feet. Hitches are liable to occur, but experience shows that we are civilized enough to live side by side, to pursue common goals and turn our country, not into a paradise, but into the happy place which Social Crediters would never even think of leaving.

• (1750)

**Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette):** Mr. Speaker, I was particularly anxious to take part in today's debate on the motion introduced by the Social Credit Party. This motion, as the minister put it, is not entirely right, but it does enable several members to show both sides of the story.

The spokesmen for the party which has moved the motion have applied themselves to saying that this gov-

[Mr. Marchand (Langelier).]

ernment has not done anything. It is truly stupid to state that someone does not do anything. You either do well or badly, but you do something. So, to say that they have made no efforts and assert, for instance, that the situation is worse than it was 30 years ago is hard to believe.

I was very much interested by the remarks of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand), who spoke about various agreements reached with the co-operation of the provinces and which are directly related to his department. In that respect, one has nevertheless to admit, objectively, that such agreements have had interesting and beneficial effects on the other provinces and not only on Quebec which had its share, and for that I am glad.

In other areas, the government has also concluded agreements, implemented programs, or handed out to the provinces considerable amounts of money which enabled them to carry out various projects.

These efforts are by no means sufficient. But to say that nothing has been done is hard to justify. In my opinion, the government should be required to do more, and reminded that they must not limit themselves to what has been achieved these past four years. I admit generally that efforts have been made but that it is still not enough.

This motion which nevertheless I think is interesting because it gives us a chance to express our views, brings us back to a very popular topic, namely federal-provincial relations.

It is clear that in the beginning, the Constitution which is directly related to these relationships, was certainly valuable. All hon. members admit that at that time it was apparently an interesting solution. Since then, it has been amended several times. We must recognize that in the last 100 years, some provinces have made greater progress than others depending on circumstances. This is a fact that always prompts the federal government to analyze the feasibility of amending the Constitution periodically, taking into account the changes that occur in every province. Progress having been greater in some provinces than in others, those provinces became stronger and asked for certain powers that others do not want at this time.

There are different viewpoints all across this country. We should acknowledge that Quebec has been recognized as the home of the French-Canadian nation, a fact which differentiates this province markedly from the others.

We are dealing with federal-provincial relations. I was listening to the minister of Regional Economic Expansion who particularly urged hon. members to make an effort and tell the truth. He was perfectly right.

I admit my special interest in the Quebec problem, just as other hon. members will be inclined to describe the problems and achievements of the provinces they represent.

With regard to federal-provincial relations, I must say that every member would benefit from reading over again the briefs submitted in the last ten years to the federal-provincial conferences.

Instead of suggesting that these federal-provincial conferences are not so meaningful, I think that they should be more frequent because, in my opinion, this is how the