

at times, some of us think somewhat eccentrically by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London in the period 1890-1935. What the Act does not provide for nor the courts resolve is the continuing struggle for advantage between the two levels of government.

The pendulum swings, in times of peace and prosperity the provinces tend to come to the fore, in times of war the provincial governments recede as the nation draws itself together to meet and overcome crisis. Tension between the two levels of government is healthy, creative and stimulating, when it represents competition aimed at giving the Canadian people the best possible service. When it deteriorates into a mere scramble for political or fiscal advantage unrelated to the needs of the people it becomes unhealthy and destructive.

As a member of both the Pearson and Trudeau administrations, I have played an active part in the development of regular and much more frequent federal-provincial conferences and consultations at both ministerial and official levels. These must and should continue. At the same time, I find myself plagued by a certain unease by one of the apparent by-products of these meetings, a nagging suggestion that the provincial governments somehow represent the people of their provinces in the negotiations while the federal government is cast in the role of a hostile outside power that must be placated or overcome.

I believe this is more a matter of appearance than reality, but appearance matters a great deal, more than ever in the television age.

It is well to remind ourselves from time to time that in our federal system the people of Canada are represented by their elected members of Parliament and their federal government as well as by their elected members of provincial legislatures and their provincial governments. The people of Ontario and Quebec exercise their influence upon Canadian policy more directly through their elected representatives in Parliament than through federal-provincial conferences of first ministers.

In July 1963, as I need not remind you, the Government set up a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. The work of this Commission and the Government action it has stimulated are changing the face of the nation. It represents, perhaps, a turning point in what I have called the continuing process of re-definition, in this case, a negotiated re-definition. Its very title emphasizes this process. If the Commission were to be set up today it would undoubtedly be called the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Multiculturalism. Its work has sharpened the focus in which we see ourselves.