

Interim Supply

government was prepared to do under its responsibilities when an appraisal of the damage had been made.

As this situation of anxiety, frustration and in some cases near despair grew with the passage of time, more and more people came to pin their hopes on what the federal government would be prepared to do when the provincial government might at long last make up its mind what it wanted. So when the proposal was made by the provincial authority for a cost sharing arrangement in regard to the net depreciated appraised loss, most of the people who were affected felt that their immediate problems were over. They assumed, wrongly as events have shown, that the federal government would be prepared to accept some such proposal, and that with the possibility that the depreciated appraised loss would be met by direct government funds, the very substantial and generous contributions which were flowing in as a result of the initial organization at the local level of a disaster fund to which people could contribute would make up the difference in the cases where the depreciated loss evaluation would not suitably assist the victims of the disaster to re-establish themselves.

The result was that when the federal government announced it was prepared to make a contribution of \$250,000, this announcement hit the people who were suffering and the people who were attempting to carry on a program of re-establishment at the local level like a bombshell. Perhaps it did not surprise me as completely as it did many of the people at home. Knowing the disappointment of many of the people, I freely confess that I felt a great sense of frustration and rage. I just could not help but ask myself, and I am still asking myself, why my constituents, my friends and my neighbours have to be the ones who are caught in this petty constitutional bickering. I had hoped that the federal government, knowing the situation that exists in British Columbia in respect of the attitudes that have been taken over the years by the present premier of that province, would have said that in this case we are going to deal with this emergency situation to the full, and then we will sit down and in practical fashion weigh the pros and cons of how disasters should be met in this country.

Then we might try to reach some kind of agreed formula as to the kind and size of disaster in which the federal government will participate in helping the people. If there are principles which have been followed in the past, as the Prime Minister says, I would submit that they are not very well

known to the members in this house or to the people of this country. So far as I know there has never been any kind of agreement between the federal and provincial levels of government that has been written down.

So far as the people of my area are concerned, as I said earlier I believe most of them feel they are Canadians first, and they want a federal government which will accept responsibility for the welfare and well being of all Canadians, as circumstances require, in every part of this country. While it is quite true that in provincial elections many people have given support to the administration which has now been in power in British Columbia since 1952, in my view because they seem to think credit is due that administration for the prosperity and economic development that has taken place over that period, nevertheless I believe many of those people who support the present administration in British Columbia for one reason or another have not very much use for the rather petulant and arrogant separatism that comes from the premier of that province.

Those of us who live in that province are quite familiar with the pattern which has been followed in this connection. At one moment the premier of British Columbia is outdoing René Lévesque in taking positions that would mean the balkanization of this country, while in the next moment he is putting out both hands to the federal government and saying "Gimme, gimme". Those of us who live in this province are quite well aware of that situation. As I have said, so far as I am concerned, this was not the time nor the occasion for the federal government to take issue with Mr. Bennett on the kind of request he made.

I have had one or two looks recently at the British North America Act. It is, perhaps, rather prophetic for the people of Alberni that section 92, which lists the exclusive affairs of provincial legislatures, lists, No. 13 as the one which gives the provinces jurisdiction over property and civil rights. While I normally do not consider myself a superstitious person, it seems that in this particular situation there is some reason to be. I hope it is not going to continue to be an unlucky section for the people of British Columbia, whether they live in the Alberni valley or in any other part of the province or, for that matter, for the people who live in any other part of the country.

I feel this is a matter which deserves reconsideration now. The working out of some detailed plan for dealing with disaster situations is something which should be the early concern of the members of this house and of the federal government. It is something which