

Interim Supply

Northwest Territories went forward some weeks ago, and it is a substantial one.

Mr. Nielsen: I am very happy to hear that.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Chairman, I do not wish on this occasion to follow my hon. friend, who has just spoken, into the realms of postal affairs. I accept the purity of his protestations on these matters as I recall our own protestations on similar matters when we used to sit on the other side. Today, Mr. Chairman, I want to discuss the recent federal-provincial conference which has already entered into this debate and which I have been assured would continue on that subject whether or not I spoke this afternoon.

Perhaps it is just as well if I put on the record my view of what happened at the conference, its value, its results and what I consider to be its considerable achievements. The conference met in a spirit of friendliness and mutual good will as one would expect in a conference attended by the leaders of the governments of Canada, ministers of Canadian cabinets and officials of Canadian governments, provincial and federal.

It is quite true that the provincial leaders defended very vigorously, as it was their duty to do, the interests of their provinces, just as the federal representatives spoke for the policies and the interests of the federal government. But it is also true that at this conference, as at previous conferences, we all spoke and, I hope, acted as Canadians, and that in a way, an intangible way which cannot be measured, because these things can never be measured, we spoke with recognition of mutual interests, difficulties and problems, with a recognition of the things we had in common, a recognition of the problems we had in common, and I think this conference brought the provincial and federal governments closer together. In that sense the result was a good one.

The procedure at the conference was that which is often followed at conferences of this kind. We had plenary sessions and we broke up into committees. The committees reported back on the last day of the conference, and on that last day we agreed on a communique to the press. There was one innovation, at least in my memory of these conferences it was an innovation, that instead of making longish opening statements at the first meeting, these statements were prepared and circulated in advance, so that when the conference met it had been possible for all the delegates to it to become aware of the position of all the other delegations, and this was the basis for discussion from the very beginning.

Through me the federal government circulated a statement, that has been made public,
[Mr. Chevrier.]

and tabled, on the federal position with regard to many of these matters. Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, it would not be inappropriate for me to put on *Hansard* two or three paragraphs from this statement which had a specific bearing on certain general matters, general problems and general principles which we had to face at the conference. Among other things, I said this:

In many areas, the federal and provincial governments are responsible for parallel action within their respective jurisdictions. Each must operate in its own sphere of jurisdiction, and respect the other's sphere. That is essential to both the letter and the spirit of our constitution. But it is equally essential that, in discharging the modern responsibilities of government, our parallel action should also be, in an important measure, concerted action. And concerted action means that there should be consultation and co-operation. Such consultation and co-operation can be effective only if they are mutual, working in both directions.

I went on:

This is essentially what I have had in mind when speaking about the need for a "co-operative federalism". This new approach means several things. It means, first a mutual respect for the jurisdictions and the responsibilities of Canada and of the provinces. It means, second, timely and reliable two-way consultation as the basis for co-ordinating the parallel action which Canada and the provinces must take on matters of common and overlapping interest. Third, it means that if and when certain tax fields are shared, this should be done in a manner appropriate to the respective responsibilities of federal and provincial authorities. And it means, fourth, assurance that this sharing not only is equitable between the federal government and the provinces generally, but also is equitable among the provinces themselves, so that each separately can discharge its own responsibilities.

Then later on in my statement on this same general point I had this to say:

A healthy and co-operative federalism requires strength in the provinces; it also requires a strong and healthy government for Canada as a whole, in whose parliament the people of each province have their representatives. Each government must not only have the powers required to discharge the responsibilities entrusted to it but also be in a position to exercise those powers.

There is one final paragraph which I might be permitted to quote:

We are rightly conscious of our differing responsibilities, jurisdictions and powers in government. But we all recognize that we have a common purpose to advance the interests and welfare of the Canadian people. That purpose transcends separate interests without in any way diminishing them, because those interests are contained within it, and because they all contribute to the fabric of a Canada that is more than the sum of its parts.

As I say, Mr. Chairman, there was an opportunity for the delegates to study each other's opening statements, and so when the conference began we proceeded at once to the consideration of the agenda before us. The items on that agenda which commanded most attention and took up most time were those concerned with fiscal and economic