

payments to municipalities and that somehow the provinces are completely out of the picture and can wash their hands of it.

Mr. Alexander: He did not say that at all.

Mr. Anderson: I do not think this is the forum in which this matter should be resolved. After watching the proceedings at federal-provincial conferences I suspect the federal government would be looked upon with a jaundiced eye if we were to attempt to tell the provinces how they should equalize their payments to the municipalities. I suspect they would give the hon. member the same advice as I do, that this is in the hands of the provinces, not in the hands of the federal government.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Roche) I had hoped that in this short hour we would have benefited from a serious discussion of a very important issue instead of such partisan cheap shots as we have just heard. Instead of the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Anderson) being the first speaker over there it would have been better had Your Honour recognized the hon. member for Westmount (Mr. Johnston), who is in his place today, because of something he said a few days ago. I notice that the hon. member for Comox-Alberni, having made his cheap political attack, has left the chamber. That is par for the course over there.

Mr. Alexander: For him, anyway.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The motion before us, which I support, does not talk about the sharing of funds. It talks about a revision of our taxation system. If hon. members will examine the motion put forward today and the motion which the hon. member for Westmount sought to move under Standing Order 43 on Valentine's Day, February 14, they will find a marked similarity between them.

● (1740)

The hon. member for Westmount made it clear, even though we all know it, that municipalities are creatures of the provinces, and in his motion he wanted the House to call on the provincial governments to invite the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities to participate in a certain process, but what was the process? It was "the ongoing process of constitutional reform with a view to entrenching powers in the constitution so as to provide municipalities with the powers and revenues necessary to permit them to effectively discharge"—why did the hon. member split that infinitive?—"their responsibilities and to provide the services expected of them by the Canadian public." I think the two members, one a Conservative and one a Liberal, have made a useful contribution to this subject by their motions. The one which was made the other day under Standing Order 43 was not allowed. Somebody said no.

Mr. Alexander: A Liberal.

Municipal Revenue Sharing

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I suppose the motion which is before us today will be talked out, but the issue is not the simple matter which the hon. member for Comox-Alberni talks about, namely, a rich province sharing some funds it has in the bank. The issue is our tax system and the distribution of powers among the three levels of government.

Much was said by the last speaker about the provinces giving things to their municipalities. Provinces cannot give what they do not have. The hon. member for Comox-Alberni may say that the federal government have given away all sorts of taxing rights to the provinces, but the provinces certainly do not see it that way. As I say, I think what we should have had in this hour was a serious discussion along the lines of two very good motions, the one before us now and the one the hon. member for Westmount tried to move on Wednesday, February 14.

I support this motion, and I hope that even yet it might be referred to a committee, or that the subject matter might be referred to a committee. It happens once in a blue moon and—who knows—maybe the moon will be blue tonight.

There is just one other thing I would like to say before I sit down and leave time for others, and that is that one of the reasons we in this party feel very strongly about a revision of the taxation system as it affects municipalities is that we believe in taxation according to ability to pay. Property taxation is not according to ability to pay, and when we force our cities and municipalities to provide so many of the services they have to provide on the basis of that unfair system of taxation, it is just not right, it is just not modern, and it is not humane. It is in the federal field, in the provincial field, and in the field of what we can do under the constitution that we can provide for taxation to be put on the basis of ability to pay. I think we should move in that direction, and I say as I sit down that I welcome the motion which is before us today, as I welcomed the motion my friend across the way tried to move on February 14.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I would like to contribute very briefly to the debate on the motion of the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Roche) which concerns a very current issue. I would like to congratulate the hon. member for having raised this subject.

During my political career, I have often been closely involved in municipal affairs. The subject of this motion therefore recalls to my mind my years in municipal affairs, and I have to say that I agree in principle with the motion.

Mr. Speaker, it has become obvious that revenue is insufficient in view of the increasing responsibilities of municipalities. We have been aware of this for a long time. This question has also been discussed for a long time, but no valid solution has ever been proposed. Every municipality in my province must provide essential public services, such as water systems, sewers, fire protection services, recreational activities, road construc-