

*The Budget—Mr. R. A. Bell*

Then, sir, the Minister of Finance made but passing reference to the field of federal-provincial relations. His presentation, in my view, was most inadequate and gave no indication of future government policy. For the past two and a half years, sir, there has been a process of emasculation of the power and authority of the parliament and government of Canada. This process appears to be accelerating. The time to call a halt is now, in this year, 1966.

Again, I adopt views expressed by Professor Underhill in the Massey lectures, and I quote from page 65, to which I have already referred:

As things are, however, our national government in recent years has approached the ten lusty provincial governments, and especially that of Quebec, in an attitude of timorous politeness, as if apologizing for the fact of its own existence. And the Canadian people as a whole cannot apparently reach any agreement to entrust their fortunes to any one political party with a majority support. They watch apathetically while our unprotected federal quarterback, looking in vain for a pass receiver, is overrun by the big husky linemen of the provincial defensive team and thrown for another loss.

Then at page 66 Professor Underhill says:

Yet it is at this time, confronted as we are by opportunities and dangers so momentous, that our ambitious provincial governments are doing their best to erode the basis of national authority and to add to their own importance and prestige. The assignment of greater responsibilities and greater financial resources to the provincial governments is, of course, in the interest of the provincial politicians and bureaucrats. I can see no evidence that it is necessarily in the interest of the people of the provinces who are also citizens and taxpayers of the Canadian national state.

Sir, I believe that there is the gravest danger that already the federal government has parted with adequate budgetary flexibility to such an extent that it may no longer be able to influence the national economy effectively, or to protect the nation against recession or depression. Believe me, sir, we must have one national economic policy. We cannot have ten regional economic policies and hope to survive as a nation. Parliament, and the government responsible to it must have and retain the broad economic powers properly vested in this national authority. I say that only in this way can there be balanced and equitable development of all regions of Canada.

• (8:40 p.m.)

The existing tax sharing agreements are due to expire and already it is clear that the forthcoming federal-provincial conference will be another raid on Ottawa. I put it to the

[Mr. Bell (Carleton).]

Minister of Finance here and now that he has a positive and unequivocal duty to call a full halt to the erosions of such encroachments upon federal authority. And I put it to the right hon. gentleman from Algoma East (Mr. Pearson) that he was not sworn as Prime Minister of Canada in order to preside over the liquidation of the national authority.

I use the words of one of his predecessors:

A strong and dominant national feeling is not a luxury in Canada, it is a necessity. Without it, this country could not exist. A divided Canada can be of little help to any country, and least of all to itself.

Those are the words of Right Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King as they appear in *Hansard* of March 30, 1939.

Let me illustrate the need to call halt to the erosions into federal authority. Mr. Eric Kierans, Minister of Health in Quebec, the man who seeks to out-Lévesque Lévesque, argues that the federal departments of agriculture, of fisheries, of national resources and of industry are now superfluous because the provinces, and Quebec in particular, have the same ministries which, according to him, are perfectly competent in their respective domains. "Canada", he has said, "will never again know a strongly centralized economy because Quebec knows better than Ottawa what its problems are; because Quebec now has the means to solve them."

Add these strange constitutional heresies of a former president of the Montreal Stock Exchange and former Professor of Commerce at McGill University—who should know better—to the weird pleas of those public men who want Ottawa to share with the provinces control over monetary policy, credit and banking, over Eskimos and Indians, and what do you have? A totally emasculated and impotent central government and a powerless parliament of Canada.

Already, we are perilously close to just that. Further federal retreat and we are over the precipice. I say deliberately that those who seek to chisel away bit by bit the power and authority historically and constitutionally vested in our central government are much greater danger to Canada than any lunatic fringe of separatists. It is boring from within in order to destroy.

I proclaim it tonight as an article of political faith that the basic problem in Canada today is not that the central government is too strong, but that it is too weak.

The provinces have emerged into a position of strength never before matched in