

Dominion-Provincial Relations

we come to clause 2, but my decision is that it is not relevant to clause 1. When we come to clause 2 I will recognize the hon. member and give him the right to discuss the point he has just raised.

Clause agreed to.

On clause 2—*Definitions*.

(*Translation*):

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Chairman, the unanimous vote recorded after the debate on the principle of the bill has indicated that every member of this house supports the principle of federal grants to universities.

Mr. Johnson: That is not true.

Mr. Chevrier: The house is also unanimous in the matter of the distribution of federal grants by the Canadian universities foundation to universities outside the province of Quebec. While the Quebec Conservative members consider this St. Laurent formula unconstitutional, they support its application in every province except Quebec.

There is no longer any unanimity on the subject, however, when we come to the second method of distributing federal grants—which the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fleming) has just described as offering an alternative—found in clause 2 of this bill. We, in the Liberal party have repeatedly stated in the course of this debate that we are firmly opposed to this new arrangement, for a number of reasons.

We said we opposed it because we think there are serious constitutional objections.

Indeed, if Mr. St. Laurent's formula has not been accepted by the province of Quebec, it is our contention that the new arrangement put forward by the federal government is even less acceptable.

We regard this new arrangement as a dangerous precedent, and a step in the wrong direction. That was our position on the second reading of the bill, and we have somewhat anticipated it at the resolution stage. We are now convinced that section 2, now under study, is a threat with respect to Canada's constitution.

However, we are not just going to oppose this new arrangement; we also want to be realistic and to suggest a solution to an alternative which we think is unacceptable, and to a difficulty we consider very serious and which, I dare say, raises a very touchy problem.

In a speech I made in this house on July 18 last, I suggested that federal grants be

[The Chairman.]

distributed to the universities in a province through a provincial board or council of universities, set up for such a purpose by the provincial legislature. In fact, others had made the same suggestion previously, and I am sure it would be well received by Quebec universities.

In a brief submitted to the Tremblay commission on March 4, 1954, Laval University, after suggesting the setting up of a provincial board of universities and of a provincial universities fund, made this statement, which I find on page 83:

We might even add that, when an agreement is finally entered into between the provincial and the federal governments with regard to the sharing of taxation fields, it may be possible for the provincial government to accept federal grants to universities. Because of the provincial character of this commission, it seems that those grants would not constitute an unwarranted interference of the federal government in the field of education.

Besides, I wish particularly to point out to the Conservative members of the province of Quebec who took part in this debate, the part of the brief indicating the wisdom of Mr. St. Laurent's formula and, according to me, the wisdom of the amendment that I intend to introduce.

But I shall go further and say that the association of Laval University professors, in submitting its brief to the Tremblay commission, took exactly the same stand and asked that federal grants be paid into a provincial university fund.

As far as the University of Montreal is concerned, if its recommendation was not precisely along those lines, the considerations it submitted to the Tremblay commission with regard to federal grants clearly indicate that the university would have strongly objected to the new arrangement now suggested by the government.

There is no doubt that the distribution of federal grants by a provincial university council exactly meets the wishes expressed by the universities and the people of Quebec connected with them.

Such a formula has various advantages especially when compared to the new arrangement established under that clause. Later on we will have the opportunity to point out those advantages when we discuss the amendment we propose to submit.

Those advantages eliminate the difficulties pointed out in the letter of the Prime Minister of Canada to the premier of Quebec, and the objections raised in several quarters in the province of Quebec as a result of the statement of the Prime Minister, when parts of those letters were published.