

*The Budget—Mr. Grafftey*

have already said, to defend and lead the federal cause. Before we have constitutional modernization we must have a dialogue at the national level here in Ottawa in order to deal with national unity and national problems. When will this government act? When are they going to act? We have had the B and B commission, we have had the Quebec legislative committee, we have had the provinces calling a confederation for tomorrow conference, we have had conferences all over the country dealing with something with which the federal authority should deal, national unity and national problems. Why is there this mandarin suspicion of politicians on the part of the present government? Whether you like it or not, whether you believe you know what is best for the people, constitutions and political documents.

You are going to have to have the co-operation of every member of this house in a dialogue in which every member of the house can take part, rather than present us with a *fait accompli*. I suggest this is one of the things upon which this government is going to have to act. Canadians all over the country are sick and tired of the buck passing between Ottawa and the provinces and the fact that no level of government is dealing effectively with many of the modern problems facing our young nation. I repeat those problems. There is inflation. Ten years ago there was no doubt in the world it was the federal authority that had jurisdiction over inflation and the cost of living. But now, the minister passes the buck and Canadians watch a government that refuses to take the first step to modernize the constitution pass the buck back to the provinces. No level of government seems to be tackling these problems.

There is housing. Hon. members opposite will tell me there is a meeting going on down the hall with the premiers of the provinces.

**Mr. Chrétien:** Are you against that?

• (3:40 p.m.)

**Mr. Grafftey:** Holding meetings does not take the place of action. The government is only now meeting with the provinces and it should have taken action one or two years ago. No government is dealing effectively with air, water and soil pollution, with urban blight, development and redevelopment, with highway deaths and injuries, with metro problems and traffic communication. Which level of government is dealing with these modern problems effectively, Mr. Speaker,

[Mr. Grafftey.]

while hon. members opposite sit on their partisan hands and do not let a national political dialogue take place? French and English speaking Canadians alike do not care as long as some level of government gets on with the job.

As we modernize our constitution we shall obviously find many questions old and new that require joint action, which in turn will require the improvement of consultative machinery between Ottawa and the provinces. ARDA and the resources experience in my view set good precedents in this regard.

Many government supporters point to all of the federal-provincial conferences that have been held. But, Mr. Speaker, these conferences are often held far too late when the damage has been done, as is the case with the one now being held in a crisis atmosphere. The conference the government is holding now should have been held one or two years ago. The government is like a rudderless ship going from crisis to crisis as the people lose confidence in it. If the government does not start establishing priorities, modernizing the constitution and improving consultative machinery with the provinces, then if I may paraphrase the remarks of my leader, Canadians will continue to feel that keeping this government in office is far too high a price to expect the people to pay.

[Translation]

**Mr. Chrétien:** Would the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi allow me just one question? How can he say that the government is holding too many federal-provincial conferences and by the same token suggest that the federal government should discuss priorities and Canadian unity with provincial governments? Does he ignore completely the federal-provincial conference which will be taking place in January with regard to the Bill of Rights?

**Mr. Grafftey:** Unfortunately, the minister has once again misinterpreted my speech. I suggested nothing of the sort. At last, problems will be discussed with the provinces. But what I said, and I repeat it, is that a national dialogue must be initiated here in Ottawa with all political parties.

That is not what I said and the hon. member misinterpreted my speech.

**Mr. J. R. Comtois (Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm):** Mr. Speaker, I sincerely wonder if the hon. members opposite are serious when they move a non-confidence motion