

Alleged Decentralization of Policies

ported by officials of all levels of government would meet to discuss urban policies regularly. Since that time there have been meetings in Winnipeg, in April, 1971, and in Victoria, in August, 1971, between the Minister of State for Urban Affairs, the provincial ministers of municipal affairs and representatives of Canadian municipalities to explore means by which tri-level consultation can be launched.

At the Victoria meeting, a tri-level interim planning committee was formed consisting of the then minister of state for urban affairs, Mr. Dalton Bales, the then minister of municipal affairs for Ontario and Mayor D'Amour of Hull, representing the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities. At the first ministers conference in November, 1971, the first ministers consisting of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the premiers or prime ministers of all the provinces, agreed that on-going discussions to finalize the exact elements of the consultative mechanism should go forward with expedition. A meeting of this interim committee to pursue this matter was scheduled for late January, 1972 but had to be postponed at the last minute when changes were made in both in the federal and the Ontario cabinets, resulting in a new Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Basford) and a new provincial minister responsible for municipal affairs. However, as the Minister of State for Urban Affairs announced last Monday, a meeting of this interim committee is now scheduled for April 10, 1972 at Mayor D'Amour's chambers in Hull. It will be chaired by Hon. D'Arcy McKeogh, Ontario minister for municipal affairs, and will comprise himself, our minister for urban affairs and Mayor D'Amour. They and their officials will be discussing the process of tri-level consultation—how to do it, when to do it, who should be included in it, and so on.

• (1440)

It is not envisaged that matters respecting possible fiscal transfers between the federal and provincial governments will be discussed by this interim planning committee, nor in the ensuing urban council of whatever type is recommended. Any debate regarding fiscal transfers per se will continue to be carried on essentially by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) and by the provincial treasurer of each province. This morning the President of the Treasury Board dealt with the matter in further detail and also commented, I understand, on how closely the provincial and federal financial officials keep in touch with each other on this very important matter.

However, hopefully such an urban council would allow representatives from all levels of government, including the municipalities, to move effectively and with greater continuity in co-ordinating and focusing upon urban issues. These issues, I repeat, are largely issues faced by the provinces and municipalities, but also confront the country as a whole. The issues of housing, transportation, pollution, social services, etc. are all included under the heading of urban issues and, it is hoped, will be focused upon by the meeting in Hull on April 10. This consultation with the provinces, and through them with their municipalities, will enable a concerted drive to be made to alleviate the worst of these problems and I think will be of considerable benefit to all Canadians.

[Mr. Weatherhead.]

May I say I appreciate the opportunity of speaking on the motion moved today by the representative of the Social Credit party. The question of consultation among the three levels of government is a very important one. While I do not agree with the suggested form of consultation with regard to monetary and fiscal policies, I hope I have pointed out that other forms of consultation regarding the broad national and urban issues are proceeding very satisfactorily, and I believe will be a great success.

[Translation]

Hon. Théogène Ricard (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few remarks on the motion introduced by the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte).

I find it somewhat difficult to accept unreservedly the motion introduced by my friend and it will be impossible for me to support it as moved.

However Mr. Speaker, some parts of this motion give me the opportunity of making a few remarks, and I will try to make them as objectively as possible.

But first, I should like to go back to what happened through the years since 1949, for instance, which were fraught with far-reaching consequences.

Mr. Speaker, it will be recalled that federal-provincial relations and the sharing of the tax basis have always given rise to great difficulties and constant wrangles, at least between the provincial and federal governments.

• (1450)

Mr. Speaker, hon. members will recall that it was under the guise of national emergency that the first incursions into the provincial field were made in 1939 by the centralist government of the time, a liberal government.

They will also recall that the then premier of the province of Quebec was sharply criticized—and he still is, as a matter of fact—for opposing the centralist views of the government in office. And in so doing, Mr. Speaker, he was only following the example set by his predecessor the Hon. Alexandre Taschereau.

Also, from 1939 to 1945, the central government found its way into the manpower field, especially into unemployment insurance. Premier Duplessis said at the time that the field of activity was definitely the responsibility of the provinces. However, anxious not to interfere with the war effort that this country was making toward a victory in the conflict that opposed us to Germany, the Quebec Premier simply gave up objecting.

They will also recall the letter that was written by another former premier of the province of Quebec, Mr. Godbout, relinquishing to the central government a large share of the powers which, according to the constitution, belonged to the provinces. Here again, this was done as a contribution to the national effort to ensure victory.

Mr. Speaker, I am mentioning those historic events simply to show that the Liberal party has always produced centralist governments, which ignored needs and aspirations not only in the province of Quebec, but also in all the other Canadian provinces, in order to preside over the fortunes of the country, in their own way. The Liberal party has always considered itself called upon by divine